Latino Parental Engagement in a New Immigrant Destination

BY

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DISSERTATION

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SUMMARY

I conducted a study of Latino parental engagement in a school district at a new immigrant destination. This study expands previous studies of parental involvement that focus mostly on urban areas in where the demographics and infrastructure is different, exploring a suburban area in where the Latino population has increased dramatically in the last 20 years.

My study used a throughout qualitative methodology: I conducted in depth interviews with more than 50 participants (Latino immigrant parents and school officials), four focus groups, a four year ethnography, and a participant observation with Latino immigrant parents. My research demonstrates that using multiple methods give us a more complete understanding of the complexities of Latino parental engagement.

My study challenges parental involvement studies indicating how the structure of the Unites States educational system does not take into consideration the engagement styles of Latino immigrant parents. I focused my research on the voice and understanding that Latino parents have about becoming involved on their children's education using theoretical frameworks that understand the culture and engagement styles of Latinos.

My research challenges assumptions that Latino parents do not get involved on their children's education demonstrating that Latino parents become engaged in many different ways in their children's education through organizing, using their culture and community knowledge. My study demonstrates that Latino parents become engaged using an engagement style based on trust, respect, and an acknowledgement of their skills and cultural knowledge. However, their engagement style does not fit the criteria that most teachers and administrators use to measure parental engagement in the educational system of the United States. Latino parents on my study

demonstrate how a group parents under the right structure and training can become highly engaged and activists, teaching parental rights to other parents and challenging discriminatory practices. Also, Latino parents used their networks to connect with other parents to organize and challenge discriminatory practices and the unfair treatment of Latinos in a new immigrant destination. Latino parents' use of social capital allows them to share information, ideas and best practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

"Nosotros somos los abogados de nuestros hijos"

("We are the advocates of our children")

Interview with Sonia

Sonia moved to the United States 15 years ago from Michoacán, Mexico. She has three children ages 1 to 16 and, after struggling academically in school with her oldest son, getting engaged in the education of her children and fighting for the rights of Latino[1] parents in the Branson Springs School District (BSSD) developed into one of the most significant aspects in her life. She, like some of the other Latino immigrant parents who participated in my study, found that schools are very confusing places that are not easy to navigate. If Latino parents do not become involved, learn about the educational system, and fight for their rights and the rights of their children, these same children could end up at the bottom of the United States stratification system. Sonia learned the phrase "we are the advocates of our children" together with other parents of the Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC) while participating in multiple workshops and trainings (Illinois Summit for Bilingual Parents, workshops, with the Parent Coordinator). This phrase became the mantra that they used to become more engaged, to teach other parents, and to reclaim their rights in the BSSD.

[1]In this dissertation I used the label Hispanic and Latino interchangeably to preserve the accuracy of the responses of the interviewees and the accuracy of government classifications.

Sonia's story is one side of the story about Latino parental involvement. Parents, like Sonia, are involved, even when school personnel blocks their attempts or do not see their engagement as "real" involvement. Sonia's story, however, is not representative of every Latino parent in the BSSD. Her story was unusual when compared with the life story of many Latino parents who stand on the other end of the spectrum and did not get involved. I explore the involvement spectrum and develop a better understanding of Latino parental engagement in the context of a new immigrant destination. Also, I look at external actors (schools, community agencies, etc.) to explain the role that they play in the engagement of Latino parents.

According to studies about parental involvement, Latino parents are the ethnic group that is the least involved in the education of their children (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Stark, Redford and Zukerberg 2013, Planty et al. 2009). Some studies propose that many Latino parents struggle to be involved because they do not have the cultural capital or do not put enough emphasis on their children's education (Floyd 1998, Turney and Kay 2009, Planty et al. 2009). However, Latino parental engagement is more complex than many studies indicate. The apparent low engagement of Latinos in their children's education is the product of many different factors. For example, many of these parents are discouraged by the discriminatory and unwelcoming environment of the school staff, are confused about how to get involved because they do not understand the expectations and involvement requirements of the schools; do not have enough opportunities to access schools; give up trying to become involved; encounter a lack of understanding by schools staff of their involvement styles; and, their engagement is inadequately measured (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos and Ochoa 2011, Hong 2011, Terriquez 2012, Lopez et al. 2003). The disconnection between low parental involvement and recent studies of Latino immigrant parents calls for more

research that explores the lives of Latino parents to better understand their involvement styles and the factors that affect their engagement. By paying more attention to the way Latino parents understand and affect engagement, we can create policies that will increase their engagement.

B. Purpose of the Study

My dissertation research fills a gap in the literature by exploring the involvement styles and the factors that affect the involvement of Latino parents through the eyes of parents like Sonia. Sonia's story represents the struggle of many Latino immigrant parents who battle for many years trying to understand the United States educational system to help their children succeed. She represents the voice of Latino parents who are ignored by the United States school system and the parental involvement literature. Investigating, the BSSD, a suburban school district in Illinois in which the Latino student population represents 71% of the student body, gives us an insight into the struggles that Latino parents encounter in their attempts to become involved in schools in the U.S.

Within the last decade, many scholars have examined the experience of Latino parents (see Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011, Terriquez 2011, 2012, Lopez et al. 2003, Ramirez 2003, Yosso 2005, 2006), but none (or few) have examined the diversity within the Latino group in relation to the intersection of nationality, gender, class, race and legal status among others. My study analyzes these multiple intersections to expand previous research and provides a comprehensive portrait of Latino parents who are involved. I examine the differences between Latino parents who are involved and Latino parents who are not involved to analyze another area that previous studies have ignored. I found that there were many structural and organizational factors that trump the individual factors of Latinos and affect their

involvement. My research explores the intersectionality (race, gender, legal status, etc.) of Latino parents to investigate their differences on characteristics, paying attention to their personal histories and their experiences of becoming involved in schools, to answer the following questions: How do Latino parents get information about opportunities for parental involvement in schools? What strategies do they use to become involved? How do parents understand what it means to be engaged, and how to engage in schools? How do schools and the community contribute to their involvement? More importantly, I look at the engagement of a group of Latino parents over a period of three years, which gave me the opportunity to analyze the elements that can help or hinder their engagement.

Lastly, my dissertation builds on the parental involvement literature examining Latino parental involvement in the context of a new immigrant destination.[2] I analyze how a school district is adapting to the exponential growth of its Latino population and what strategies they are using to respond to Latino parents "lack" of involvement. What we know about immigrant parental involvement is mainly in the context of large urban school districts in traditional immigrant gateways that have a more supportive infrastructure for Latino families. We know much less about what is happening in new immigrant destinations that lack mediating institutions to support immigrant parents and students.

More specifically, this study addresses the following questions:

1) How do Latino immigrant parents conceptualize parental engagement in the context of a new immigrant destination?

[2] A new immigrant destination is defined as a city, region or state that did not have previous experience with immigrants and their immigrant population has grown dramatically recently.

2) How do Latino immigrant parents understand their own engagement and participation in their children's schools?

3) How are Latino immigrant parents becoming engaged in their children's schools?

4) What are the characteristics of the Latino parents who are engaged?

5) How does the intersection of race, gender, class and legal status affect engagement among Latino parents?

C. Significance of the Study –Contributions

Answering these five research questions allows me to address why Latino immigrant parents are perceived to be the least engaged of any other ethnic group, and how they see and understand their own engagement in their children's education. By including the voice and understanding of involvement of Latino parents I am able to test the dominant literature that privileges the school's and the state's measures of parental involvement and the literature that points to Latino parents as not engaged or not concerned about their children's education. Understanding how Latino parents understand engagement and the characteristics of the parents who are involved can help in the creation of policies that will improve the outreach that schools need to undertake in order to include Latino parents as equal partners.

My study challenges the deficit model perspective, expands our understanding of the parent-school dynamics in a new suburban destination where the student population has shifted from predominantly white to a Latino majority in the last ten years, and explores the various struggles Latino parents face in becoming involved in schools. With the fast and continuous growth of the Latino students, most of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, it is imperative that we learn why their parents show low levels of school involvement, how schools

are contributing to this trend, and what approaches can be employed to increase their involvement and their communication with schools. This research will improve the achievement of Latino students and the success of the United States educational system in general.

D. Involvement or Engagement

In this dissertation, I use involvement and engagement interchangeably. While I recognize the distinction between these terms and the critical radical standpoint of using engagement over involvement (see Ferlazzo 2011, Olivos, Terriquez, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa 2011). I use both terms to represent the voice of parents and school staff during my research. According to Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos and Ochoa (2011),[3] parental involvement means involving parents as volunteers that support the school bureaucracy, in contrast to parent engagement that builds relationships between parents and schools and engages them as critical partners that have a voice in the education of their kids. Also, because of the nature of my research with mostly Spanish speaking parents these words mean something different when translated to Spanish; in which involvement becomes *involucrado*, *implicado, participación o apoyo* and engagement becomes *comprometido* or compromise that tends to be used when someone is engaged to a person and is going to get married or is committed to something. For this reason, I prefer to use *involucrado, apoyo* o *participación* over *comprometido* when asking

[3]According to Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, Ochoa, "We view the term parent involvement as synonymous with school activities and practices designed to involve parents (or better yet, keep them busy) in support of the school and its daily tasks as defined by its leadership. These activities or practices are often driven by a bureaucratization that buffers the school from the bicultural school community. Parent involvement in these instances takes the form of assisting the school by being present (or visible) in selected school-sanctioned activities (Allen, 2007). Parents symbolically support the school through their representation in school requirements, for example, by providing their signature (s) to meet state and federal compliance requirements. Parents also participate in manners that allow school officials to train them on preferred behaviors or proper social capital that is required of their children to have access to the core curriculum. The generic term parent involvement therefore conjures up a passive, one-way connection that benefits the school and places the accountability of student success and failure exclusively on the parent-family. In contrast, parent engagement, in our view, is a school-community process designed to bring or construct an open relationship between school personnel and the parent community in support of the student's social and academic development. Parent engagement takes the form of "critical partners" in the education process that is focused on building welcoming and trusting relationships, building leadership skills, and creating spaces of belongingness and awareness of how to navigate the school system and seeks to promote cultural, social, linguistic diversity and inclusion. Parent engagement can be generalized as an active, two-way connection that is an inclusive, ongoing, and engaged process through mutual agreement and that has direct benefits to the student/family. Furthermore, parent engagement is used by both the parent and the school to address the developmental skills of the child to match their career aspirations and their social democratic participation (Shirley, 1997)" (2011:10-11).

Spanish speaking parents about their engagement in school and engagement when I am writing about their experiences of new ways of getting engaged with schools.

The discussion of involvement versus engagement is important in academia and I prefer to use engagement when necessary; however, I use these two terms interchangeably. On the one hand, I use engagement when I describe how Latino parents associate with schools and their kids' education in a non-traditional way. On the other hand, I use involvement when a school's staff describes the engagement of parents or when I describe the traditional literature about parental involvement. One of the central points of my research is to question definitions and measurements of parental involvement because they do not measure adequately or do not make sense of the realities of Latino families that see their relationship with the schools and their children's education as something more than involvement. Using the term engagement to describe the relationship of Latino parents with the schools district personnel better captures the critical standpoint of my dissertation and the voice of the Latino parents in the context of my research.

E. Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I assess the parental involvement literature. I explain the way it has been categorized, defined and measured historically in the United States to show the inadequacies that these definitions and measurements present to the conceptualization of Latino parental involvement. In this chapter, I also explain the literature on new immigrant destinations to position the parental involvement literature within this new area of study. Based on this, I position my case study of Latino immigrant parents in a new immigrant destination within this literature and I better showcase my contributions to this field. Finally, I combine the traditional

theoretical frameworks that are used to study parental involvement with new approaches that include the voice and engagement styles of Latino parents in three different categories: cultural deficit theories, "top-down" theories (social reproduction theory), and community-based theories (reading the word and the world, funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth and the parent mentor program approach). This approach allows me to offer a thorough explanation of the parental involvement literature and to explain the gaps in the literature that ignore the voice of the Latino immigrant parents that my research will fill.

Chapter 3 describes my research site and my methodology. I explain how a suburban new immigrant destination that has experienced an explosion in their Latino population provides a context distinct from previous studies that look at Latinos only in urban areas. This chapter also details my four years of participant observation and ethnographic research, the focus groups I facilitated and interviews I conducted. I also describe the analytical framework (Critical Race Theory) that I am using to examine my data.

In Chapter 4, I explain how Latino parents understand their involvement and their experiences and struggles trying to become involved. I compare two groups of parents: "low" involved Latino parents and highly-engaged Latino parents to show their engagement struggles and to better understand their human agency. This chapter acts as a departure point to compare and analyze the situation that Latino parents encounter in the BSSD in their involvement attempts. For this, I use interviews conducted with more than 30 Latino parents, observations from four focus groups and four years of ethnographic data.

In Chapter 5, I explain the role that the community plays in the engagement of Latino parents. More specifically, I explain the role that social services agencies, Hispanic businesses,

the Catholic Church and other community actors (library, community college, etc.) play in the development and engagement of Latino parents. This chapter is based on my ethnographic observations and the experiences of many Latino immigrant parents that became more engaged in schools with the help of these actors. This chapter emphasizes community building and social networks as important elements in the development and engagement of Latino parents in new immigrant destinations. Also, it pays attention to the importance of having mechanisms that help parents develop social and cultural capital in combination to acknowledging and valuing the culture and knowledge of Latino immigrants.

Chapter 6 considers the role that schools play in the engagement of Latino parents. I analyze structural changes, school staff's racial and ethnic composition and school's involvement strategies. This analysis allows me to better understand how schools in a new immigrant destination attempt to engage Latino parents. Also, it gives me insight into the interactions and relationships that Latino parents have with the schools. In this chapter, I use data from more than 20 interviews with school staff, and observations of events and meetings in the BSSD.

In Chapter 7, I look deeper at the activism and agency of Latino parents. Whereas chapters 5 and 6 discuss the organizations that provide spaces in which parents meet each other and interact informally, this chapter focuses on the BPAC and its activities over a period of three years. The engagement of these parents is affected by the role of the schools as explained in Chapter 6 and the role of other community actors as explained in Chapter 5. The story of these parents is a story of struggle, development and hope that I have been able to witness during my research. Their stories allow us to witness the daily struggles that Latino parents encounter trying to become more engaged in the education of their kids in a new immigrant destination and teach us strategies that can be used to acknowledge their voice and their engagement styles. In

this chapter, I demonstrate the importance of acknowledging parents' voices to create relevant engagement strategies, and I talk about the struggles and small victories of Latino parents working together with the school staff. It also explains the struggles of Latino parents who are highly engaged in their fight against assimilation, and to have their voice and culture acknowledged. In addition, it summarizes the experiences of Latino parents navigating the bureaucracy of the schools to explain how parents work together and build relationships with schools and the community, and the actual strategies and the future directions in which the Latino parents are engaging in meaningful ways in the school district. I explain the ways in which Latinos were creating their own programs and initiatives, with or without the collaboration of the school district, and how they became change agents through teaching other parents, advocating for their children, and taking responsibility for their own engagement. Finally, I explain the advocating techniques that parents were using to fight discrimination and injustices in the district and the way in which they were using their voices and knowledge to empower other parents and to empower themselves.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter in which I analyze my case study with Latino parents in a new immigrant destination in relation to a combination of theoretical frameworks that I discussed in chapter 2. Analyzing these theories in relation to my data allows me not only to position my research, but also permits me to add new theories to the parental involvement literature. I build on these frameworks to create new theories and approaches that will take into consideration the voices of Latino parents. I explain these new theories in the light of studies on new immigrant destinations. Also, in this chapter, I answer the questions of my research and explore the limitations of my research. I also discuss insights and recommendations for the importance of doing research with Latinos in new immigrant destinations. In addition, I explain

in more detail the implications of my research and the connection to major studies of sociology of education, immigration, and racial and ethnic relations. Finally, I make recommendations about the importance of studying from "the bottom" to understand the parental engagement of Latino immigrant parents thoroughly and I explain the future directions that scholars need to move toward in order to help in the creation of a more equal playing field for Latinos in U.S. schools.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the parental involvement literature. I demonstrate the trajectory of research with parents in the United States and describe the Latino parental involvement literature as a comparison to the mainstream literature. In doing this, I am able to identify the gaps in the literature and to position my research within it. Also, I describe the new immigrant destinations literature to position the parental involvement literature within this area of study. This is an unexplored area on parental involvement research. Finally, I describe the major theoretical traditions that traditionally have been used to describe parental involvement and I bring together community-based approaches that can be used to acknowledge the understanding and knowledge of Latino parents. Bringing these theories together allows me to explore Latino parental engagement through a different theoretical lens.

In this chapter I argue that using community-based frameworks instead of the traditional parental involvement approaches results in a more accurate assessment of Latino parental engagement and contributes to the creation of policies that can be implemented in schools that are struggling with the low involvement of Latino parents. To make the case, I review the traditional literature and the traditional measures that most scholars use to explain the involvement of parents to show that they do not acknowledge the culture and engagement style of Latino parents as well as frameworks that are community-based. Understanding the way Latino parents define or describe involvement can help in the creation of policies that will improve the outreach that schools need to include Latino parents as equal partners.

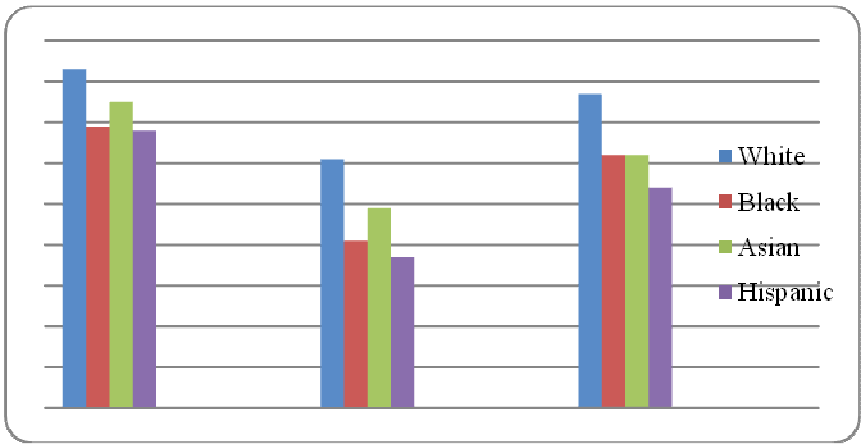
B. Parental Involvement

Studies of parental involvement in schools have increased rapidly in the last 20 years and since 2000, mass media, scholars, policy makers and educators have paid more attention to its significance (Patall et al. 2012, Ramirez 2003). This increased attention stems from research that shows that parental engagement is one of the most important factors in reducing educational inequality in the United States. It is also a response to the increase of federal mandates that require schools to have a parental engagement component in their programs. Many studies show that parental engagement is crucial for students' success and for the reduction of the achievement gap (Lee and Bowen 2006). Children of parents who are engaged in school tend to have higher academic achievement, good attendance, inclination to do homework, a sense of security, an increase in self-regulatory abilities, better social emotional attitudes and higher self-esteem than children whose parents are not engaged (Flynn 2007, Calderon 2000). Also, parental involvement promotes self-esteem, language skills, leadership skills and a sense of power among parents (Hong 2011).

Although many studies show the positive role that the involvement of parents plays on the educational success of children, they do not pay attention to differences in parental involvement along lines of race, ethnicity, class, or migrant status (Marschall et al. 2012; Lopez 2001; Olivos et al. 2011). Instead, they focus on white middle-class parents and pay little attention to parents who are immigrants, Latino, non-white and/or low-income (Ramirez 2003; Lopez et al. 2001; Yosso 2005, 2006; Orelus 2010, Marschall et al. 2012). Historically, studies on immigrant or Latino populations employ a deficit perspective, blaming parents for their lack of involvement and do not take into account the structural reasons behind their low involvement (Lopez et al. 2001, Yosso 2005, 2006, Orelus 2010, Ramirez 2003).

Most studies on parental involvement show that White and U.S. born parents have higher levels of participation than minority or immigrant parents (NCES 1998, Floyd 1998, Lareau 2003, Planty et al. 2009, Turney and Kao 2009). For instance, a nationwide survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that a greater percentage of White parents attend a school or class event, serve in a school committee, volunteer at school, and participate in school fundraising than any other group; Hispanic parents are at the bottom of each category (Planty et al. 2009) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Parent Participation at Schools by Race (Source: NCES, 2009)



Besides showing that White parents tend to be the most involved and Latino parents the least involved, the NCES survey also finds that middle class parents tend to be more involved than working and lower class parents. According to the NCES survey, for children from kindergarten through 8th grade, "58 percent of students in non-poor families had parents who reported volunteering or serving on a school committee, compared with 32 percent of students in poor families;" for youth in 9th through 12th grades, "73 percent of students in non-poor families had parents who reported attending a school or class event, compared with 43 percent of students in

poor families" (Planty et al. 2009:74). Based on these data, Latino immigrant parents are understood as the least involved because of their ethnicity and their low class status. This viewpoint can contribute to how school personnel perceive Latino immigrant parents and can be used to supports the deficit model perspective.

The NCES survey has become the "standard" by which the U.S. Department of Education and school personnel understand parental engagement. As a result, the dominant view is that white parents and middle-class parents tend to be more involved in schools than minority and low-income parents. Because it simply states the rates and not the reasons why these race and class differences exist, there is an assumption that lack of involvement by minority and working class parents is due to lack of interest or cultural deficiencies. These assumptions have become the hegemonic discourse that is reproduced by mass media, scholars, policy makers and educators. Also, most studies assume that the traditional categories that measure parental involvement are all inclusive and generalizable. Yet the way that the government, schools and researchers measure parental involvement is very narrow. For example, for many teachers and principals, parental involvement focuses on parents who can attend school functions and meetings; those who do not attend are perceived as uncaring. These assumptions lead scholars to imply that low-income parents do not attend because they do not desire or care about the education of their children (Ramirez 2003). The main problem is that these assumptions are culturally biased in favor of white middle-class parents, and put minority parents at a structural disadvantage. Also, schools in general use actions such as volunteering, open house attendance, and specific school activities as the main measures of parental involvement. This ignores the involvement that minority parents have with their children at home (Lopez et al. 2001). Also,

this ignores the culturally specific standpoint of these parents and the way they understand and conceptualize involvement.

The emphasis on traditional categories and measurements (see Gordon 1969, Gordon and Breivogel 1976, Schikedanz 1977, Honig 1990, Berger 1991, Chavkin and Williams 1993, Jones 1989) also overlooks the role that schools play in the involvement of parents. For example, there are many other factors such as inflexible meeting schedules, the absence of training for school's officials to work with parents, and staff attitudes concerning parents that contribute to the involvement of parents (Planty et al. 2009). This also had been demonstrated with studies that show that schools generally embrace and encourage the participation of parents whose cultural capital mirror that of the school while they rebuff and discourage the involvement of parents who lack this cultural capital (Lareau 1987, 2003, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bourdieu 1984, DiMaggio 1982). These culturally-biased research studies, by taking for granted the role of schools and racialized measures of cultural capital, require future scholars to address how parents describe their own involvement. My research addresses this gap in the literature focusing on the story of a group of Latino immigrant parents who are trying to understand the parental involvement policies of the United States educational system.

C. Defining and Measuring Parental Involvement

Since the creation of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), programs that are funded by the federal government require parental involvement (Bauch 1994). This was part of the restructuring of the U.S. Department of Education after the civil rights legislation that required equal treatment for minorities. According to Watson et al. (2012), during the 1960s, the series of policies created to increase parent involvement moved to

empower the community to take charge of integrating African American and U.S. Latino children into schools as a way to develop the education of racial minority and low-income children and their families. Also, since the creation of the Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the 1980s, there has been a significant increase in research and guidelines to create family and community programs in schools (Epstein and Sheldon 2006). Although the U.S. Department of Education requires that schools have a parental involvement component, they do not provide a clear definition or a clear measure for parental involvement. Accompanying the lax definition and measurement, there is not enough supervision by the government to ensure that schools are complying with regulations. In addition, lack of effective measures of parental involvement by the Department of Education makes legislation regarding parental involvement ineffective in practice.

Due to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the U.S. Department of Education was required to craft a clearer definition of parental involvement:

> The statute defines parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring— that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education 2004).

The legislation aims to foster a genuine partnership between parents, schools and communities as the vehicle for student academic success (Howard and Reynolds 2008) and I argue, has the potential to address the shortcomings of previous conceptualizations of parental involvement. It seeks to include groups that historically have been excluded from the education process (Fege and Smith 2002). It empowers minority parents within their children's schools and

acknowledges them as full partners in the decision-making process of schools and on advisory committees. However, NCLB falls short of providing enforcement mechanisms to guarantee compliance at the state and local levels and as a consequence it is challenging to know if schools are really complying with the federal directive (Howard and Reynolds 2008). Many schools do not comply with regulations and fail to engage the parents or inform them of the rights enacted by the NCLB legislation. The absence of governmental monitoring nulls its expressed purpose of promoting parental involvement as full partners because there are no consequences for schools that do not comply.

Furthermore, this oversight does not allow government officials to determine the role that race and class play on parental involvement in schools (Howard and Reynolds 2008, Ramirez 2003). This creates a situation where the full benefits of parental involvement and the help that it is supposed to bring to minority students is not achieved or measured accurately. My research examines how a school district defines and operationalizes parental involvement in a suburban context where racial, ethnic, class, gender and legal status differences separate school staff from the parents, to analyze the impact of the NCLB mandate on the involvement of Latino immigrant parents. This not only follows the projected goal of NCLB of recognizing the potential partnership between family and school, but reveals the extent to which race, gender, and legal status of the students and their families shape what the partnership looks like.

In the case of Illinois, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) policy follows NCLB since parental involvement is a requirement under the law. Schools districts need to have a district wide and a school-specific parental involvement policy together with a school parent committee (ISBE 2015a). Also, the State requires school districts to hold a parent meeting annually to review policies annually, to involve parents in decision making and to set aside funds

for parent involvement activities (ISBE 2015b). However, there are no specific guidelines on what these policies should look like, how to implement them, or to what extent parents must be involved. Due to the lack of guidelines, many school districts measure parental involvement by how many parents volunteer at the school, and how many attend meetings, school performances, parent-teacher conferences and open houses. These measures mostly focus on quantifying parental involvement, reducing it to a onetime event or at a level of involvement that is far from the equal partnership that the U.S. Department of Education legislation mandates. Based on these measurements, school districts can meet the minimum governmental requirements for parental involvement without exerting major effort or without suffering major consequences.

Historically, parental involvement in the United States has been conceptualized and measured in many different ways (Bauch 1994, Marschall et al. 2012, Boethel 2003). According to Howard and Reynolds (2008), the parental involvement literature is problematic because it stresses its benefits but does not clearly define what parental involvement means. Many academics define parental involvement as the type and amount of involvement that parents have with their children's education (e.g. Epstein 1987, Jones 1989, Gordon 1976). It is typically measured through involvement at schools or involvement at home. Involvement at school consists of going to parent-teacher conferences and going to school activities or events featuring students, and volunteering (Lee and Bowen 2006). Involvement at home consists of assisting your kids with homework, talking about schoolwork and their experiences at school, and doing activities related to school at home (Lee and Bowen 2006). Parental involvement is also seen as a partnership between parents and school staff (Marschall et al. 2012). These multiple conceptualizations and dual areas of involvement add to the complexity of defining

parental involvement and setting criteria to adequately measure it. The vague conceptualization explains the shortcomings of policies that have attempted to encourage parental involvement.

Since the 1960s, scholars have developed ways to measure and understand parental involvement in schools (see Schikedanz 1977, SDC 1978, Honig 1990, Berger 1991, Chavkin and Williams 1993). These measures focused mostly on seeing parents as volunteers, attending parent-teacher conferences and school activities, or being mere "helpers" at the school. For example, Jones (1989) developed a numerical four-level scale to measure the quality, or type of parental involvement. According to this scale, level 1 involves attendance at PTA meetings and volunteer activities. Level 2 involves the dissemination of information to parents about students, school activities, curriculum, budget and other school related issues through newsletters or other means of communication. Level 3 includes more involved forms of involvement such as membership in advisory groups, committees and paid volunteering. Lastly, level 4 involves parental participation in decision-making on curriculum, hiring, budget, and other crucial issues (Bauch 1994). This four-level scale qualified the categories and shapes how parental involvement is conceptualized, measured, and understood by schools. It allows schools to claim some kind of parental involvement that complies with state and federal mandates. According to Jones (1989), most schools focus on the first 3 levels because they view parents as passive recipients of information and orders. Parents are more than volunteers, however; they are also teachers, decision makers, and active learners involved in their children's education (Bauch1994; Gordon 1969; Gordon and Breivogel 1976). It is at level 4 where the equal partnership mandated by NCLB can be achieved since parents directly impact the schools' operations and their programs (Bauch 1994). At this level, parental agency leads to better engagement with

schools and to authentic changes in the school parental involvement practices. Academics need to move beyond level 4 to have a more accurate measure of parental engagement.

Joyce Epstein' framework measuring parental involvement is the most used and accepted as a way to assess involvement (Bauch 1994; Marschall et al. 2012). Epstein's categories focus on the role that schools play in encouraging and increasing parental involvement (Bauch 1994). Epstein's framework consists of six types of parental involvement: "(1) helping parents develop a supportive home environment; (2) communicating with parents about programs and student progress; (3) recruiting parent volunteers; (4) helping parents support their children with homework and learning; (5) involving parents as decision makers; and (6) providing links to social support services in the community" (Marschall et al. 2012:132). Each of these categories explores how parents are connected to school, community and their children's education. According to Marchall et al. (2012), although Epstein's types of involvement look at involvement from multiple viewpoints, they were incomplete and for this reason Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) added two more types of involvement. These two types are: "(7) training teachers to work with families and (8) reaching out to culturally diverse families in the community" (Marschall et al. 2012:132). Kessler-Sklar and Baker's additions provide a culturally relevant approach for diverse families by stressing the need to train teachers to work with culturally diverse families. Epstein's involvement types are used by many school districts across the country. The problem is that Epstein's involvement types are ill-equipped to deal with culturally diverse families or to describe the different styles that parents use to foster the education of their children (Moreno and Valencia 2002:203). Another problem is that many schools do not put enough emphasis on involving parents as decision makers or on preparing teachers and school staff to work with culturally diverse families.

One of the main problems of parental involvement strategies is that they center around the creation of more programs that are culturally irrelevant for many parents. Ramirez (2003) argues that parental engagement is much more than the creation of programs to bring more parents to the school and that the strategies to increase parental engagement must take into account and be tailored to the demographics of the student body and school community to give voice to parents. To build real partnerships with parents, schools must strengthen their relationships with parents. The success of parental engagement does not reside in the measures or definitions; rather it lies within meaningful communication and in the partnerships that parents and schools build; this creates the foundation of a relationship where the agency of interested parties is recognized and utilized (Hong 2011).

D. Latino Immigrants' Parental Engagement

Studies that focus on Latino immigrants' parental engagement are starting to surface in the last decade. These studies are mostly conducted by Latino scholars in response to the absence of Latinos from the parental involvement literature, and bring a more critical eye to the studies and theories of parental engagement to give a more nuanced understanding of the experience of Latino parents. These studies show that the experience of being engaged is different for Latino parents than it is for white middle class parents. Research points to the adverse effect of discrimination on, cultural disregard of, and an unwelcoming school environment for Latino parents (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011). Latino parents are not only discouraged from becoming engaged in schools, but they also experience informational barriers that impede their engagement because they don't understand the system (Terriquez 2012). Also, the apparent lack of engagement of Latino parents is in a certain way the product of misunderstanding of their engagement styles and practices that is

invisible to administrators and teachers (Moreno and Valencia 2002). When Latino parents want to be involved, their understanding of involvement and their engagement styles are not compatible with the school expectations of involvement.

There are many others reasons why the experience of Latino parents is different. First, Latino parents may not be cognizant that in the United States, parents are expected to actively participate in the education process of their children. Throughout Latin America, parents hold teachers in high esteem and defer to their expertise, and challenging teachers is not an acceptable practice (Terriquez 2011, Valdes 1996). Second, Latino parents do not feel comfortable, because they may not have the cultural knowledge that schools encourage and value (Delgado-Gaitan 1991). Third, Latino parents who do not speak English face major language barriers that affect their involvement. Immigrant parents, particularly those with undocumented status, are typically less involved because they fear authorities, lack childcare, lack reliable private or public transportation, or have inflexible job schedules where they cannot take time off work to attend schools activities (Lopez et al. 2001, Louie 2004, Llagas and Snyder 2003, Epstein 1987, Marschall et al. 2012).

Fourth, in addition to the reasons explained above, Latino parents also face structural challenges that hinder their involvement in school. For example, in a study with minority parents (mostly Latinos), Marschall et al. (2012) found that differences in involvement in established and new immigrant destinations was connected to school's structure and practices. In established destinations, the success of parental involvement initiatives and programs was strongly associated with the presence of cultural brokers and the school's characteristics. In contrast, in new destinations, successful parental involvement was associated with staff professional development and teacher training. They also found that schools with Latino or African

American principals had high levels of parental participation. This might be because the nonwhite principals were more aware of the needs of non-white parents (Marschall et al. 2012). Other studies also show that having minority administrators and minority school-board members translates into increases in minority staff and better understanding of minority students and their families (Magdaleno 2006, Tillman 2004, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth 2004). These findings point to the need to study schools as complex organizations and workplace environments that promote or hinder Latino parental involvement. Organizational practices such as staff training and staff composition have a profound effect on the parental involvement of Latino immigrants. Also, school practices and engagement techniques can be the difference in why Latino parents are less involved than other groups.

E. New Immigrant Destinations

Studies of parental engagement have ignored the impact that the place of immigration plays on the engagement of immigrants. Even when there is an increase in studies that focus on new immigrant destinations, little attention has been given to schools in new immigrant destinations. New immigrant destinations are defined as areas that "have witnessed tremendous growth in their foreign-born population in the last 20 years (Chapa and de la Rosa, 2004), and have thus had less time to adjust and adapt to incoming populations than have established destinations" (Marschall et al. 2012:135)[4]. According to Marschall et al., "although immigration

[4] New immigrant destinations, "… have fewer resources and less infrastructure to address immigrant needs and the incorporation process is considerably more complex. For example, Latino immigrants in new destinations often confront hostility and discrimination, hampering their attempts at social and political integration (Kochar, Suro, and Tafoya, 2005). The influx of a young, mainly Spanish-speaking population can also challenge the traditional black-white racial dynamics of many new destination places (Marrow, 2008). African Americans in these locations have made progressing gaining elected office, yet research suggests that Latinos are less likely to get elected to local school boards in districts where the African-American population is larger than the Latino population (Marschall, 2005). Although other studies report that the U.S. born in some small towns have positive sentiments about immigrant newcomers and many residents show a significant degree of acceptance because they associate immigrants with renewed economic vitality (Fennelly, 2008), without the organizational supports and advocacy structures, immigrants in new destinations are likely to be initially disadvantaged in ways that significantly affect the schooling and educational outcomes of their children."(Marschall et al. 2012:135).

is much talked about in the media today, less attention is paid to how these marked demographic changes are affecting U.S. schools" (2012:130). Most studies that look at parental involvement not only ignored Latino parents, they also completely ignored new immigrant destinations.

My research looks at a new immigrant destination to expand previous studies with Latino parents. Only a few studies had looked a parental involvement in new immigrant destinations and to my knowledge only one study looked at the parental involvement of Latino parents in a new immigrant destination. This study was conducted by Marschall et al. 2012, and found that the parental involvement initiatives for minority parents in new immigrant destinations were only successful when they were associated with the development and training of school staff and teachers.

F. Theoretical Frameworks – Understanding Parental Involvement

Our theoretical understanding of parental involvement can be divided into three types of approaches: cultural deficit theories, "top-down" theories and "bottom-up" theories. Cultural deficit theories focus on blaming the culture of minority parents for their low involvement; top-down theories focus on macro structural explanations of parental involvement; the bottom-up theories build on community strengths and practices that transform parental involvement. By combining these approaches, I seek to develop a more nuanced understanding of parental involvement. Among the top-down approaches, I describe reproduction theory to show how schools reproduce inequality on the basis of parental involvement. Among the bottom-up approaches, I focus on Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti and Gonzalez 1992, Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti 2005), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006), the Parent Mentor Program approach (Hong 2011) and the Reading the Word and the World approach (Freirian approach).

These bottom-up theories provide a "hands-on" approach that breaks the reproduction cycle implied by the top-down approach, challenge the cultural deficit model and allow the involvement of Latino parents as equal partners.

1. Traditional Frameworks

a. Cultural Deficit Model

Historically, many studies have analyzed parental involvement using a cultural deficit approach. Most of this cultural-deficit-based research believes that minority and income families are less involved because of their culture, class, and intellectual and moral deficiencies (Gorsky 2008, Orelus 2010, 2011, Yosso 2005, Moreno and Valencia 2002, Valencia and Black 2002). According to Gorski (2008a), deficit theory has a history of being used to justify imperialism and colonialism. In the United States, the writings of Taylor (1927), Gould (1932), and Lyon (1933) were the pioneers in promoting and perpetuating deficit thinking, and perpetuate the myth that Latino (in this case Mexican) parents did not care for education (Valencia and Black 2002). Deficit thinking became notorious with the culture of poverty thesis by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis' (1959, 1965). According to Lewis, low-income families create a distinct culture that perpetuates their poverty and underclass status for generations. Lewis's findings are based on data collected from Mexican and Puerto Rican families, creating the notion that these groups were dysfunctional, culturally deprived, and unable to escape their impoverished situation by themselves.

An important contributor to the culture of poverty argument on the United States was the sociologist and politician Daniel Moynihan. In the now famous Moynihan Report (1965) he argues that the structure of the black family is the main contributor of their own socioeconomic

problems. He also mentions that the Black family structure is broken creating an environment in which many of their children are being raised in an environment of a high divorce rate, high unemployment and lower educational success among others Black families that are trap in a "tangle of pathologies" that will not allow them to escape their underclass condition (Moynihan 1965). This creates a cycle of poverty, disadvantage and dependence on welfare for Black families. The Moynihan Report became a fundamental element of the War on Poverty policy enacted by Lyndon B. Johnson. With this policy, the culture of poverty argument became installed in the minds of policymakers and the general public. This argument later was used to explain the lower educational achievement of Blacks and Latinos and to explain the non-involvement of Blacks and Latino families in schools or in the education of their children. According to Valencia and Black, (2002), the cultural deprivation literature of the 1960s (see Frost and Hawkes 1966; Hellmuth 1967, Marans and Lourie 1967, Havinghurst 1966) became the mythmakers of the idea that certain children and their families were intellectually deprived, and culturally and socially disadvantaged. Of course, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos were included in these groups.

Even after the cultural deficit approach had been questioned, highly criticized, and proved wrong by many studies it is still being use to explain the non-involvement of minority families by some scholars (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Valencia and Black 2002, Small M.L., Harding D.J., Lamont M., 2010). In more recent studies, the cultural deficit idea was reframed into the "at risk" literature (Valencia and Black 2002, Sleeter 1995, Swadener and Lubeck 1995, and Valencia and Solorzano 1997). According to Valencia and Black, "writing in 1995, Swadener and Lubeck (1995) reported that since 1989 over 2,500 articles and conference papers have dealt with the at risk construct. Given their overrepresentation among the poor and low-

SES families, Mexican Americans and other Latinos are considered by scholars at the risk literature to be part of this group" (2002:86). This at-risk and deficit construct recently resurfaced with the book published by the Nuyorican politician, Herman Badillo. According to Badillo, "Hispanics parents rarely get involved with their children's schools. They seldom attend parent teacher conferences, ensure that children do their homework or inspire their children to dream of attending college" (2006:196). The continuation of the deficit and at-risk thinking creates a situation in where the low parental involvement of Latino parents is taken for granted by some scholars, teachers, administrators and by the general public who have the preconceived notion that minority families are broken, uncaring, and uninvolved with their children.

According to Dudley-Marling, "theories of cultural deprivation that emerged in the context of the War on Poverty and desegregation in the 1960s, have re-emerged in the context of No Child Left Behind and the resegregation of American schools" (2007:2). Today, many government policies and school practices still look at families of color from a cultural deficit viewpoint and many teachers and administrators believe this idea. This is the direct result of deficit theorists using television shows and news among others media sources to portrait stereotypes that are already ingrained in the mainstream psyche to pathologize certain groups instead of showing the real reasons for the oppressions of these groups (Shields el at., 2005; Villenas, 2001; Gorski 2012). According to Gorski (2008b), this creates a scenario in where certain economically disadvantaged groups like the homeless, poor, single mothers, and undocumented immigrants become easy targets of deficit theorists. For this reason, no matter how much low class and minority parents try to get involved, they can still be targeted as not involved or deficient.

Many scholars have positioned themselves against the cultural deficit model (see Gorski 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012; Orelus 2010; 2011, Yosso 2005, Moreno and Valencia 2002, Valencia and Black 2002). These scholars know that in the case of parental involvement, the cultural deficit model ignores many structural factors like discrimination, racism and social reproduction as the causes of the underachievement of minority students or the low involvement of their parents. According to Orelus,

> "The deficit theory fails to acknowledge that economically disadvantaged parents have desires and dreams for their children, and are willing to work as hard to enable them as privileged parents. This theory also fails to realize that these parents have resources that teachers can incorporate into lesson plans to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students more effectively. The deficit theory does not recognize either the sacrifices and efforts teachers and parents, through school-family partnerships, can make to ensure that students of all backgrounds advance academically. Nor does this theory offer any suggestion as to how school personnel might promote parental involvement with literacy programs designed to apprentice parents into school literacy practices" (Orelus 2010:28).

The deficit model does not see the array of skills and talents that families of color can bring to the table and entirely ignored any solutions or new engagement styles and ideas that these parents bring with them.

b. Social Reproduction Theory

In opposition to deficit thinking, social reproduction theory (Bowles and Gintis 1976, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) argues that the structure of the school is the place where social inequalities are reproduced. According to Collins, Althusser (1971) "conceptualized the school as an agency of class domination, achieving its effects through ideological practices that inculcated knowledge and dispositions in class-differentiated social subjects, preparing them for their dominant or dominated places in the economy and society" (2009:35). Most notable is how schools track students academically which links classrooms to a class-stratified workplace environment. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that U.S. schools reproduce social and class

inequalities by teaching a curriculum that align the skills being taught to the social class of the students. As a result, schools engage in economic reproduction by maintaining and replicating class privilege through education.

i. Cultural Capital

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) expanded social reproduction theory by focusing on how cultural capital reproduces inequality. The concept of cultural capital can be defined as the proficiency of people in the practices and cultural codes that are dominant in a given society (Gao 2011). Cultural capital theory explains why families from different class backgrounds have different access to these dominant cultural codes. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital determines the success of children at schools because it is inherited by the family and reproduced by the schools. What is being taught is removed from the teaching methods and practices of the students' families and reflects the social norms and values of the dominant culture. Because the educational system mirrors the structure of society, it transmits the culture of the dominant group and in this way reproduces and perpetuates inequality (Bourdieu 1984). For example, schools in the U.S. are used as a tool to assimilate immigrants and native minorities into the white middle class by favoring the values of the dominant group; boarding schools sought to assimilate Native American Indians while Americanization programs targeted immigrants (Lomawaima and McCarty 2002, Burdick-Will and Gómez 2006, Fernández 2002). These programs emphasized acculturation, particularly the learning of the English language and American values, over academic content. According to Bourdieu (2001), for families within the dominant group, schools are more proficient in increasing and validating the cultural capital that children already inherited from their family than in teaching this cultural capital to children whose families are not a part of the dominant social group. As a result, schools add to the advantages accumulated

by children of members of the dominant group, while failing to provide opportunities for mobility to children of lower-status families. The U.S. educational system values the cultural capital associated with white middle-class families. According to Farkas (2003), Latino, American Indian and African American children lag behind Asian and white children in school readiness and this disadvantage is magnified by the schools. For example, "whereas African-American children begin elementary school approximately one year behind whites in vocabulary, and knowledge, they finish high school approximately four years behind whites" (Farkas 2003:1126). This creates a scenario where many of the children from minority and low-income families, like Latino immigrants, are not allowed to move up in the stratification system because they do not possess nor do they have access to this cultural capital (Rueda et al. 2007).

Although Bourdieu (1984) conceptualizes cultural capital as something different from skills, most researchers conflate cultural capital with human capital (skills and competence). For instance, Lareau and Weininger argue that "first, the concept of cultural capital is assumed to denote knowledge of or competence with 'highbrow' aesthetic culture (such as fine art and classical music). Second, researchers assume that the effects of cultural capital must be partitioned from those of properly 'educational skills', 'ability' or 'achievement'" (2003:106). According to Lareau and Weininger, to avoid this conflation we "… need for a broader conception that stresses the micro-interactional processes through which individuals comply (or fail to comply) with the evaluative standards of dominants institutions such as schools" (2003:106). This approach does not fix the problem with the conceptualization of cultural capital because it views minority parents, such as Latino immigrant parents, as failing to fulfill the evaluative standards imposed by schools because of the structural design they face.

Other studies that use Bourdieu's cultural capital definition look at how parents struggle with helping their children with homework; with material resources (such as books and computers); and the vocabularies of parents; the sense of entitlement that parents have when they are interacting with teachers as equals, speaking, reading and writing English (e.g. McDonough 1997, Reay 1998, Blackledge 2001). However, these studies are still being used to explain why minority children and their families have lower social and educational outcomes than whites. This assumption structures the way that many schools approach their work with minority families; these families are seen as needing help because their race and class upbringing did not provide them the "necessary" cultural capital (Yosso 2005). Even when Bourdieu's (1986) capital framework has been relatively useful in understanding how schools reproduce inequality, in describing the processes, scholars legitimize the cultural deficit model in describing the experiences of non-white parents. The reality is that the lack of cultural capital is not a cultural deficit. Instead, scholars should address it as a structural issue because the structure of the school is premised on the value placed on the dominant group's cultural capital. This allows schools to reproduce class and racial inequality while blaming disadvantaged students and their families for their educational failures.

These uses of cultural capital theory show that students from middle and upper class status and their families have the cultural capital that is rewarded in the schools and tend to benefit from the expectations of the schools. On the other hand, low-and working-class students and their families tend to be penalized due to their "lack" of cultural capital in the school system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bourdieu 1984, Lareau 2003). Studies on parental involvement follow this pattern. They show that schools promote the parental involvement of parents that have the desired cultural capital and discourage and invalidate the involvement of parents who

do not possess this cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bourdieu 1984, Lareau 2003). Despite being cast as the great equalizer, the educational system of the United States has historically perpetuated white privilege. The studies above show how structural racism and white privilege are embedded and institutionalized in U.S. institutions (i.e. Bonilla-Silva 1996, 2010). There are some scholars who challenge the dominant paradigm within education studies. For example, Yosso (2005, 2006) claims that, rather than focusing on deficit, schools should focus on the community cultural wealth of families to understand the different abilities and knowledge that communities of color have. Schools and researchers need to work from the point of view of the families and communities that they are serving. This paradigmatic shift will allow schools to create more effective partnerships and to better comprehend the way that Latino parents perceive and understand their own engagement.

ii. Social Capital

In addition to cultural capital, social reproduction theory focuses on social capital. Social capital measured by the obligations present in social networks, helps people secure socioeconomic resources (Portes 1998; Bourdieu 1986). According to Small (2009), social capital theory posits that when people are more connected in social relationships, they do better because of the goods that are present in these relationships. "These goods-the social capital-include the obligations that people who are connected may feel toward each other, the sense of solidarity they may call upon , the information they are willing to share, and the services they are willing to perform" (Small 2009:6). Social capital gives resources to people that they can use when they need it (Small 2009). Resources include but are not restricted to jobs, diplomas, and other forms of information. Because social networks tend to be homogenous along race and class categories, however, members of historically disadvantaged groups may find it difficult to

have access to networks that have information and power (McPherson Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001, Mollica, Gray and Treviño 2003).

Social capital also is translated into economic advantages by granting diplomas, certifications and opportunities that provide access to positions in the higher rungs of the stratification system to certain groups (Bourdieu 1986). Parents who are more connected to the social networks of schools can obtain more information about events, scholarships, programs, volunteer opportunities, job opportunities and decisions that affect their children's education than parents who are disconnected from these networks. For example, in a study with parents who have children in day- care centers in New York, Small (2009) found that the rules and activities of the day-care centers were more important that individual characteristics such as race, ethnicity or income in the networks that parents created.

iii. Tracking

The practice of tracking adds to the social and cultural capital discussion by showing how school practices constrain the relationship between parents and schools. Schools sort students into different tracks or ability groupings (tracking) that translate into the labor market (Bowles and Gintis 1976, Milkelson 2003). According to Hallinan (1994), tracking is a school practice that assigns students to different instructional groups based on different abilities that aim to facilitate learning and teaching for students. Research shows that most schools track students based on apparent ability (Kliebard 1995; Oakes 1990, 2005 as cited by Burris et al. 2008:574) and that Black and Latino students are disproportionately assigned to the lower tracks (Dornbusch et al. 1996, Carbonaro 2005). Latino immigrant parents who are not involved or do

not understand the school tracking system, or do not have the desired cultural and social capital, cannot contest or even realize the consequences of tracking on their children.

Understanding the role that cultural, social capital and tracking plays on parental involvement gives insight into the challenges Latino parents face in their interaction with schools due to class, ethnic and racial differences and social networks. Scholars need to explore how the networks of Latino parents transfer to their involvement in schools and the extent to which these networks connect or exclude them from the decision making positions at schools to have a more accurate picture of Latino parental involvement. I investigate these networks to better understand their role on the involvement of Latinos in the City of Branson Springs and to examine the way Latino immigrant parents understand school practices such as tracking to have a more nuanced understanding of the effect of these practices on their involvement.

2. Community-Based Frameworks

In addition to reproduction theories, there are "bottom-up" theories that inform my research. They emphasize the strengths of disadvantaged communities, and how schools can work with parents towards the educational success of children. These approaches expand reproduction theories and offer solutions to break the reproduction cycle. They can be used to create policy and to create change in schools. Using these approaches, schools acknowledge the culture, skills, and knowledge of Latino parents. These "bottom-up" approaches privilege the knowledge and resources of families themselves in opposition to "top-down" theoretical frameworks that privilege the agency of schools and State. "Bottom-up" approaches lead to improvements in the curriculum and practices of schools to be more inclusive of Latino parents and their children. Scholars and schools need to analyze parental engagement strategies using

community-based frameworks. These approaches include funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, parent mentor program, and reading the word and the world which will be discussed in more detail below.

a. Reading the Word and the World

The Reading the Word and the World approach was developed from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987). Freire states (1998) that to teach the word (content of a class) first you have to understand the world (culture and worldview of the students) and included this worldview as part of the lessons. According to Freire (1998), educational programs generally fail because they do not take into account the knowledge, culture and worldview of the students. Freire (2009) argues that dialogical education built in conversation and collaboration with the community can help uncover how people view their reality. Because nobody knows their reality better than those who live it, we should engage with the students to develop a deeper understanding of their lives that can lead to better education. This approach challenges the focus on schools and categories of involvement to privilege the experience of not only parents, but also the communities where the schools are found.

In *Pedagogy of Freedom,* Freire emphasizes the importance of parental involvement as a factor that supplement children's agency over their education: "one of the pedagogical tasks for parents is to make it clear to their children that parental participation in the decision-making process is not an intrusion but a duty, so long as the parents have no intention of deciding on behalf of their children" (1998:97). In the literature review about Latino parental involvement, we saw that Latino parents need to be the advocates of their kids in schools and they have to fight for their rights and the rights of their children, because nobody else will do it. The studies

discussed above suggest that, because of the value associated to white middle-class capital, the rights of non-white children may be limited because they have limited access to it because of assumptions made about their ability and their right to have access to it.

According to Freire, many educational and political programs historically had not worked because they were created from the personal views of reality of the authors, ignoring the reality of the people to whom the programs were directed (2009:94). Using the knowledge and world of Latino parents, schools need to work towards creating more services that are relevant to the life of the Latino immigrant parents and their children. The main problem with the approach that many school districts are using to try to involve the parents is that they do not want to understand the world of the immigrant families (Moll et al. 1992, Gonzalez et al. 2005, Orelus 2010, Terriquez 2011, 2012). Freire states, as the cultural capital studies discussed above suggest, that many times teachers use strategies that are prejudicial to the learning process of students because of their culture and worldview (1998). In the same way, these strategies affect how parents interact with schools and staff.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals strengthens Freire's argument and the value of taking into account parent's knowledge and worldview. According to Gramsci, all people are intellectuals and every person "carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a philosopher, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, and a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it" (2001:1141). Gramsci believes that people need to challenge the cultural hegemony of those in power by creating a counter hegemony. School systems are created based on a hegemony that maintains the status quo socializing people to agree on the ideology of those in power (Gramsci 1971). According to Gramsci, hegemony is "the spontaneous consent given

by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (1971:12). Gramsci believes that the dominant ideas were based on an ideology that becomes what people see as common sense. These ideas are not set in stone and can be changed through time. Gramsci believes and see the power of subordinate groups to create counterhegemonic ideologies and movements to change social systems (including schools).

Similar to Freire, Gramsci argues that all people have a voice and a particular view of their world that makes them potential agents of change when they realize that their voice and knowledge have power. This conception makes them experts in their world that school officials and researchers are trying to enter. Gramsci and Freire demonstrate that recognition is the first step towards becoming conscious of the power of the marginalized. This consciousness, on the part of school officials, will encourage them to see how parents can advocate for their children's needs. This consciousness is based on their counter hegemonic discourse that will challenge and tweak the system. For these reasons, school officials have to enter into dialogue and collaboration with parents to understand their world before they can work on strategies that will foster and solidify their partnership. The dialogue will allow schools officials to understand their civic engagement, and will facilitate communication and relationship building.

b. Funds of Knowledge

The funds of knowledge approach is based on research that tries to understand families using qualitative research (Moll et al.1992). Based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, it recognizes

the social and cultural knowledge that families possess as an asset that needs to be used by schools. This approach focuses on the sociocultural forces that shape learning and that can allow parents, teachers and the community to work together for the benefits of children (Kozulin et al. 2003). According to Moll et al.:

> Our concept of funds of knowledge is innovative, we believe, in its special relevance to teaching, and contrasts with the more general term "culture," or with the concept of a "culture-sensitive," curriculum," and with the latter's reliance on folkloric displays, such as storytelling, arts, crafts, and dance performance. Although the term "funds of knowledge" is not meant to replace the anthropological concept of culture, it is more précis for our purposes because of its emphasis on strategic knowledge and related activities essential in households' functioning, development, and well-being. It is specific funds of knowledge pertaining to the social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region, not "culture" in its broader anthropological sense that we seek to incorporate strategically into classrooms (1992:139).

This approach calls for teachers to engage with, and incorporate into the classroom, the knowledge that students' families possess (Moll et al. 1992; Ramirez 2003). According to Ramirez (2003), ignoring community norms can be devastating to children's development. Fuller and Olsen (1998) argued that schools must learn and take into account the cultural and economic differences among families and adapt to them. They recommend having bilingual groups that can advocate and monitor the decisions that schools take on behalf of parents, learning more about the belief systems that different families have, and asking parents what they want for their children (Fuller and Olsen 1998). This approach gives a voice and more power to Latino parents, and creates a more relevant curriculum and involvement strategies for parents and their children. Also, Latino parents can be used as collaborators in the creation of more relevant parental involvement strategies and activities.

Funds of knowledge can be institutionalized to expand the curriculum and teaching methods of schools to create a more relevant curriculum and more effective involvement

strategies for Latino students and their parents. Using the funds of knowledge, teachers can connect their classroom practices with the background of students and families. This approach calls for schools to develop an understanding of these families by visiting their students' homes to relate more to the families and to learn from them. Teachers have to become students who can learn from the background of Latino families and use this knowledge as part of their lessons and as part of the strategies that schools can use to attract more parents. This approach can be used to break the school-home dichotomy. Schools and families have to communicate and relate in order to build strong relationships for the benefit of children. Another important aspect of this approach is that teachers can use parents as co-teachers or guest speakers at the school, allowing them to teach children about special skills and abilities that they have. This will allow schools to see parents from their strengths instead of their deficits.

c. Community Cultural Wealth

The Community Cultural Wealth approach centers on the talents, skills and cultural knowledge of families and communities of color (Burciaga and Erbstein 2010; Yosso 2005, 2006). This approach expands the work by cultural capital scholars that exposed how schools reproduce inequality at a theoretical-level, often lacking an empirical angle that would yield concrete alternatives and solutions. Community cultural wealth does not only explain the social reproduction of schools and criticizes the cultural deficit model, but it also gives us alternatives that show the strength of minority parents and emphasizes that Latino parents are important members and contributors of society. These alternatives can be used to improve parental engagement among Latino immigrants. If schools want to increase the engagement of Latino parents, they need to look at their strengths instead of looking only at their weaknesses. This

will not only increase the engagement of Latino parents, but it also will increase the collaboration and communication between schools and parents.

The community cultural wealth approach builds on the funds of knowledge and the Freirian approach by exploring the diverse assets that minority parents possess. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), Yosso (2005) examines how minority families use six different types of capital (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital) to express their community cultural wealth. Yosso (2005), defines aspirational capital as the capacity of people to maintain dreams, hopes and plans for the future; linguistic capital as at the skills that people can have with their use of multiple languages or styles of talking; familial capital as the connection that people have with their family and their capacity to have a sense of recollection and history; social capital as the networks that people create with other people or the community; navigational capital as the skills that people use to maneuver through different institutions; and resistant capital as the skills that people learned through oppositional behavior challenging inequality in their process of navigating social institutions. These forms of capital are constantly changing and they position minority parents as members of society that contribute in many ways even when they do not have the same access to opportunities than other groups (Burciaga and Erbstein 2010).

The Community Cultural Wealth approach strengthens the previous approaches in many ways because it exposes the importance of taking into consideration the life, knowledge, culture and skills of Latino parents. This approach moves away from the deficit approach that schools use to evaluate the involvement of their parents bringing the knowledge and voice of Latinos to the picture. It also distances itself from the cultural capital approach that many times accepts the cultural codes of the group in power as the main measures to access minority parents'

engagement. Using this approach allow us to have a better understanding of the struggles that Latino parents encounter in their attempt of becoming engaged in the context of a new immigrant destination because its value their knowledge.

d. Parent Mentor Program Approach

The Parent Mentor Program[5] is an approach developed by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago. This approach, like Funds of Knowledge, Community Cultural Wealth and the Reading the Word and the World privileges the parents' frame of reference but also provides the tools to build a strong relationship between parents and schools. According to Hong (2011), this approach is an example of what parental engagement should be in schools. Hong divides parental involvement into two models: the traditional model and the ecological model. While the traditional model focuses on schools, the ecological model centers on parents. The traditional model views parents as deficits, and thus focuses on the promotion of activities, sets limits on parental participation, and seeks to alter parenting practices. In contrast, the ecological model views parents as assets, and thus promotes their engagement, broadens participation, transforms families, schools and communities. Hong (2011) argues that schools need to move away from the traditional model of engagement to a more ecological model to create more relevant engagement strategies for parents.

[5]The Parent Mentor Program "started in 1995, the program has trained over thirteen hundred parents across eight schools to work in classrooms with teachers and to support student learning. Every parent mentor devotes more than one hundred hours each year to a teacher's classroom, building connections with teachers and students. Using a model for leadership development, the program serves as a first step for parent participation, in schools and for long-term engagement as parents' leaders. From this, LSNA created five school-based community learning centers that offer programming ford adults (e.g., General Education Development [GED] and English as a second language [ESL] classes) and children (homework support, folk dancing, and book clubs) after school four days each week. The community centers are staffed and coordinated by parent leaders. Parents have also gone on to work in the AmeriCorps-sponsored Parent Tutor program, where parents work individually with students who need additional academic support. And parents who develop an interest and passion for teaching can enroll in a bilingual teaching degree program organized by LSNA. The Grow Your Own Teachers program was the model for a statewide initiative that has launched similar program across Illinois" (Hong 2011:6-7).

Hong identifies three core processes that are needed to transition from the traditional to the ecological approach to parental involvement. First, the school must develop mutual forms of engagement that allow parents to collaborate with teachers in the classrooms and pay attention to the needs and experiences of families and schools. These mutual forms of engagement allow a more dynamic and reciprocal engagement type (Hong 2011). Second, the school must build authentic relationships by interacting with parents daily and constantly. According to Hong (2011), using a relational approach to parental involvement will create more opportunities for parents and school staff to have more significant relationships based on trust and exchange. These relationships allow parents to learn new skills and allow teachers and school staff to see parents as assets that contribute to the schools, instead of seeing them as deficits. Lastly, the school must share leadership and power because this nurtures parent leadership and creates more shared decision making opportunities and equality among parents and school staff. For example, parents in Chicago can use the local school council (LSCs) experience to teach leadership, critical decision-making and civic engagement (Hong 2011). Public schools can become important places that promote the civic engagement and one of the most important institutions that integrate immigrants into society (Hong 2011, Rogers et al. 2008, Terriquez 2011, Ramírez 2003). Although this is not an easy process, the Parent Mentor program shows that is possible.

The parent mentor approach fosters the collaboration between parents and schools and brings parents as equal partners sharing leadership and making decisions in the schools. This program has expanded to more than forty-four communities in Illinois and elsewhere. This program provides opportunities to immigrant parents to share their skills, learn new skills and to work directly with teachers at schools. These opportunities break the schools' barriers that many parents encounter when they try to interact with schools and create an environment that improves

the relationships and communication between parents and teachers. The effectiveness of this program is based on moving away from traditional involvement strategies to increase communication and collaboration of parents and teachers on a daily basis. This model opens the doors of the schools to Latino parents and promotes better relationships between schools and parents. This approach allows parents to move towards an equal partnership with school staff.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the context of the community of my research and the multiple qualitative methods that I used during my four years of research to comprehend parental engagement. I explain the context of my research to set the stage and describe the new immigrant destination. This helps to situate the context that Latino immigrant parents encounter when they come to this new immigrant destination. This context section also helps to better situate the interaction between Latinos parents, the community, and schools in Branson Springs.

B. Context

1. The City of Branson Springs

The research site is the City of Branson Springs,[6] a small semi-rural suburban area in Illinois. This area was home to farming communities that grew around a chain of lakes and wet prairies. In the beginning of the 20th century, they grew with the creation of railroad lines that connected them to major metropolitan areas. Also, urban families built small cottages for summer vacations to take advantage of its rural atmosphere and various lakes. Yet the Branson Springs area remained a farming community with low population growth until Latinos began moving to the area to work on farms, in construction, and in landscaping during the housing market boom in the 1990s. After the 1990s, the community experienced rapid population growth and changing racial demographics as Latinos moved to the municipalities in large numbers. The landscape from a typical white rural Midwestern town in which small businesses owned shops

[6] For confidentiality purposes I rename the site of my research as the City of Branson Springs. For the purpose of this research, most of my focus would be on the Latino parents. The Branson Spring School District (BSSD) and the context of Branson Springs is used to explain the context as a new immigrant destination.

dominated to a mostly Latino vibrant community in which most stores are Hispanic owned with signs in Spanish. According to an elected official, Hispanics converted the Branson Springs downtown area from a ghost town where stores were closing and the economy was depressed to a vivid area that is booming economically. This perception is shared by some of the school staff in my interviews who mentioned that since Latinos moved to the City of Branson Springs, the downtown area was revitalized and "saved" by their businesses. In a conversation with Leo (a long time teacher in BSSD), he describes this community transition:

Leo: Yeah, and so when you just go to a board meeting you still see some of the people (white residents) who are, like, still fighting the fact that they do not want their community to turn Latino… and look what they've (Latinos) done. Go downtown. It would be a dead downtown if it wasn't for them… It's beautiful. You've got the great bakery, and good restaurants, and the grocery store. It's, like, gee – it's, like, it couldn't be better. Go to the white communities – they've abandoned their downtowns for the malls and the trip to big shopping stores. No, these guys (Latinos) are great at starting small businesses. They're just what you need, really, to survive as a community. They're great at community revitalization.

Leo's description summarizes the way in which Branson Springs has changed from a white community to a Latino community in the last few years. Also, he describes how the white residents and school staff are still in denial of this transformation. This is a typical phenomenon in new immigrant destinations where long-time residents do not accept the rapid changes that a new group brings (Zuñiga and Hernandez-León 2005).

Branson Springs looks very different than many of the traditional suburban areas in the United States today. The town is adorned with Spanish language signs and all kinds of stores that catered to the rapidly growing Latino population. For example, in the downtown area you can find various Mexican restaurants, grocery stores (*colmados*), fresh markets, a Latino music store (*Discoteca*), a Latino dancing studio (for Latino dance instruction including Zumba dance lessons), hair salons, money-transfer stores, clothing stores that specialize in *norteño* style hats

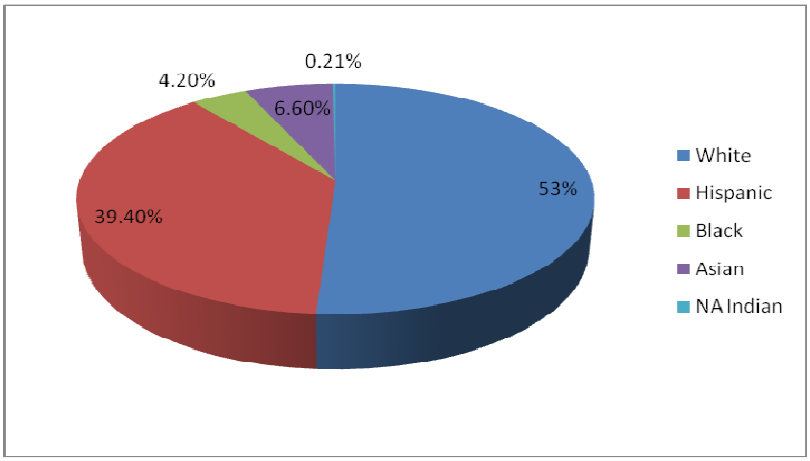
and boots, insurance companies, and many other stores that cater specifically to the growing Hispanic population. According to Ivelisse (a school staff person):

> …Down here maybe a two minute drive what's known as little Mexico it's like a strip of Mexican restaurants and stores and bakeries and whatnot. Umm, the owner there of one of the grocery stores actually owns almost all the businesses on her side of the block, and she is an entrepreneur: …The woman started with one small store and expanded the entire block for her own, so this one women owns the grocery which is nonstop, nonstop go, very popular, that has a bakery next door, that has a Mexican restaurant. And then down another ten blocks she owns the next grocery store and the next restaurant…

This area has become the main shopping area for Latinos and is expanding. According to Ivelisse, this area is known as Little Mexico. As the result of many new Latino stores replacing the non-Latino stores as the direct result of the rapid demographic change in this new immigrant destination.

According to Zuñiga and Hernández-León (2005), Latinos, especially Mexicans, moved to new settlements areas in the Midwest and East of the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. The City of Branson Springs became one of these settlements in the Midwest. After the 1990s, the community experienced rapid population growth and changing racial demographics as Latinos moved to the area in large numbers. According to the 2010 Census, 52.5% of the area's total population is white and 39.4% is Hispanic/Latino. While the total population growth from 2000 to 2010 was 46.2%, the Latino population grew 97.7% during the same time. In general, the Latino population grew from 8% in 1980 to 39.4% in 2010 (see Figure 4 for the 2010 demographic description of the City of Branson Springs). During the same time, the area experienced a decrease in their white population from 90% in 1980 to 52.5% in 2010.

Figure 4: 2010 Racial and Ethnic Distribution of Branson Springs



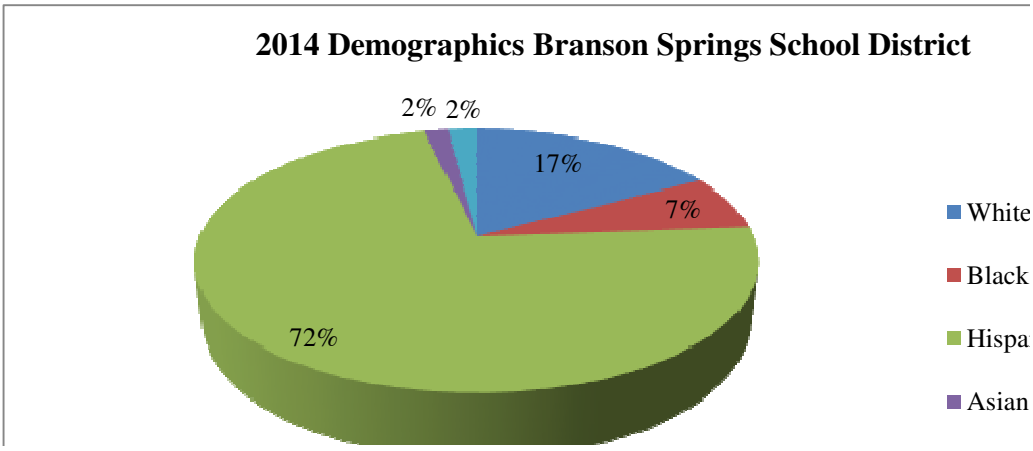
2. The Branson Springs School District (BSSD)

The Branson Springs School District (BSSD) is a unified district. With more than 7,000 students in the district, Latino students represent 72% of the total student population (see Figure 5). Even, when Latinos are not the majority in the city, they are in the school district. Over the years the Latino/Hispanic student population has increased from 34% in 1998 to 72% in 2014. The white students' demographics decreased from 60% to 17%. The decrease of the white student population is due to a combination of white flight, and younger families moving away from the area looking for more job and education opportunities closer to the city of Chicago.

In addition to the racial demographics, there have been income and age changes as well. The Branson Springs school district is becoming a place where the Latino population is becoming younger and the white population older. In addition, 28% of the students were below the poverty line and 74% of the students were eligible for reduced-price or free or lunches in 2012. This makes it a district of mostly low income and minority students.

The enrollment of Latino students varies by school, ranging from 56.1% to 86.8%. The highest percentage of Latinos is concentrated at the lower grades (elementary and middle school), a trend also seen at the national level where the largest increase of Latinos is within the younger cohorts. The demographic group of Latino children is the fastest growing in the United States. Latinos are expected to increase from 22% in 2009 to 29% in 2025 (Pew Hispanic Center 2009); making it imperative that schools find relevant strategies to work with Latino families.

Figure 5: (Source 2014 Illinois Interactive Report Card).



Although the majority of the students are Latinos, 94% of the faculty and staff are white. Given the increasing numbers of Latinos in Branson Springs, it is paradoxical that Latino faculty and staff have decreased even further from 4.90% in 1999 to 0.8% in 2011. This decrease is partly due to grant-funded positions and temporary positions (such as assistant teachers) that were cut. Especially during the 2008 economic crisis, the funding for many teacher aides and grant-funded positions was eliminated in Illinois. Basically, the workers at the bottom at the hierarchy are the ones that are more affected by the cuts, and most of them, because of the racialized structure of the labor market, happen to be Latinos. According to many of the Latino parents and Latino employees whom I talked to, Latino employees are the first ones that the

district let go in an economic crisis. School staff also mentioned that the racial and ethnic mismatch between school staff and students is in part the result of difficulties in finding "qualified" Latinos that can be hired (I discuss this more in depth in chapter 5). In interviews and conversations with Latino parents and Latino staff assert that racism and discrimination are the reasons for the decrease in Latino staff (I discuss this more in depth in chapter 5). Because of this situation, school's personnel (that are mostly white) are separated by race, class and education from Latinos, causing tensions and miscommunication among both groups.

Academically, most of the schools at the BSSD have not met the Academic Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for many consecutive years and were under a restructuring plan for the 2013-2014 academic year. This restructuring plan not only impacted the curriculum for bilingual students, but also impacted the parental involvement initiatives that the school district follows. For example, for the first time, parents were included in the discussion of district-wide changes in areas such as curriculum and restructuring possibilities. Also, the school district personnel decided to implemented more initiatives to increase parental participation in school committees and in decision-making processes.

I focused my research on Branson Springs and the Branson Springs School District for various reasons. First, this area is a prime example of a new immigrant destination, allowing me to expand research with Latino parental involvement to new immigrant receiving areas to understand how Latinos parents and schools adapted and interacted with each other with a demographic shift. The rapid growth of the Latino population gave me the opportunity to examine how schools were adapting. Second, because Branson Springs is a rural area, I can examine immigrant integration in a rural setting, which is an unexplored area on research with Latino parental engagement. Third, the racial mismatch between the Latino students and the non-

Latino staff allowed me to test the effectiveness of parental involvement practices using social reproduction theory and community-based frameworks. This helps me to explain the struggles with racialization and assimilation that Latino parents encounter in their interaction with schools in new immigrant destination. Finally, there is just one Latino immigrant social service organization in the area, which suggests that the supportive infrastructure for Latino immigrant residents was vulnerable.

The city of Branson Springs was an ideal location to study the engagement of Latino immigrant parents. This location allowed me to expand studies of immigrant integration looking at the rapid increase of Latinos in a period of 20 years together with the presence of an immigrant-serving organization and the institutional changes that the school district was experiencing to adapt to the increase of Latino families. The uniqueness of this location allows me to expand previous research with Latino parents and public schools. According to Small (2009), in case studies, uniqueness allows researchers to develop and extend theories. The Branson Springs case provides the opportunity to explore a school district dealing with the rapid increase of Latino parents without having the knowledge, personnel or tools to recognize the funds of knowledge of the Latino community (Gonzalez et al. 2005, Moll et al. 1992) that may be present in traditional destinations with older Latino immigrants groups that have constructed a supportive infrastructure. The young age of the Latino community in the City of Branson Springs allowed me to observe how different variables and institutional changes interact to create a partnership between parents and the school district. How they interact also allowed me to determine the strength of the partnership, to explore the role that parents and other players (such

as school staff, social service agencies, churches and cultural brokers[7]) play in this relationship-building process, and to identify which alternatives to the processes described above are used to increase parental engagement.

3. The Bilingual Parents Advisory Committee (BPAC)

The research is centered on the activities and experiences of the Bilingual Parents Advisory Committee (BPAC). Using the BPAC as a case study allows me to fill many gaps in the parental involvement literature by examining parental engagement from the standpoint of Latino immigrant parents in a new immigrant destination in where the infrastructure is different than in major cities across the United States. The BPAC is not exclusive to the Branson Springs School District (BSSD). According to ISBE (2015a), every school district in Illinois needs to have parent and community participation through an advisory committee[8]. In the BSSD, the BPAC has existed since the year 2000 when only a few parents were part of the group. In an interview with Vanesa, the only parent who had been a member of the BPAC since 2000, she explained how things changed significantly since the beginning when the BPAC was inactive and not too many people knew about it in comparison to 2014 when almost every Latino parent in the BSSD know about the BPAC.

[7]A cultural broker is a person that serves as a broker that mediates between the culture of the host country or institutions and the culture of immigrants or foreign born persons (Jezewski and Sotnik, 2001).

[8]"Section 14C-10 of the school code explains: "parent and community participation – Each district or cooperative shall establish a parent advisory committee consisting of parents, legal guardians, transitional bilingual education teachers, counselors, and community leaders. This committee shall participate in the planning, operation, and evaluation of programs. The majority of committee members shall be parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in these programs. Membership on this committee shall be representative of the languages served in programs to the extent possible. A) The committee shall: i) meet at least four times per year; ii) maintain on file with the school district minutes of these meetings; iii) review the district's annual program application to the State Superintendent of Education; and iv) autonomously carry out their affairs, including the election of officers and the establishment of internal rules, guidelines, and procedures. (Section 14C-10 of the School Code)." "B) Each district or cooperative shall ensure that training is provided annually to the members of its parent advisory committee. This training shall be conducted in language that the parent members can understand and shall encompass, but need not be limited to, information related to instructional approaches and methods in bilingual education; the provisions of State and federal law related to students' participation and parents' rights; and accountability measures relevant to students in bilingual programs" (ISBE 2015a).

The BPAC consisted of a core group of about 10 to 20 parents in 2013, but in the last two years it has grown tremendously and has become the main representative of Latinos in Branson Springs. Even when the group consisted of small group of parents, they were able to attract 100 parents on their meetings in 2010. These numbers tripled during my four years of ethnography in the BSSD such that in 2014 around 300 parents (600 family members including children) were coming to the activities organized by the BPAC. Latino parents from the BPAC were the main responsible for the engagement of other Latino parents. They worked together to bring workshops, cultural events and other activities to support parents and to provide them a space in which their concerns and voices could be heard. The BPAC members acknowledge their culture and knowledge, and have gained the support and trust from other Latino parents in the school district (I explain this in Chapter 7).

C. Research Questions

My dissertation answers the following questions:

1) How do Latino immigrant parents conceptualize parental involvement in the context of a new immigrant destination?
2) How do Latino immigrant parents understand their own engagement and participation in their children's schools?
3) How are Latino immigrant parents becoming engaged in their children's schools?
4) What are the characteristics of the Latino parents who are engaged?
5) How does the intersection of race, gender, class and legal status affect parental engagement among Latino parents?

D. Methods

Parental involvement studies have mostly examined parental involvement using surveys and short term research strategies to see if Latino parents go to meetings at schools, volunteer, etc. (see Gordon 1969, Gordon and Breivogel 1976, Schikedanz 1977, Honing 1990, Berger 1991, Chavkin and Williams 1993, Jones 1989, Epstein 1987, 1991, 2001). According to Hong 2011, Terriquez 2011, 2012, Ramirez 2003, and Lopez et al. 2001, scholars need to explore more deeply the factors affecting involvement of Latino parents and to seek alternatives to encourage better partnerships between parents and schools. With this in mind, I used multiple qualitative methods to look more in depth at the parental engagement and to comprehend the way Latino parents engaged with schools in the context of a new immigrant destination.

My research methodology expands on previous studies that used mostly surveys, and prescribed interviews to understand engagement. As explained in Chapter 2, these studies provide an incomplete story of Latinos and ignore their standpoint and engagement styles. I used a strategy of building on each method to create a more complete story of the engagement of Latinos in a new immigrant destination. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2004), multi-methods are the heart of qualitative research. I used these multiple methods to explore the lives of Latino parents more deeply and to increase my understanding of the relationships and networks that Latino parents build. I used a case study methodology (looking at Latino immigrant parents) to delve deeper into the struggles of Latino parents in a new immigrant destination looking specifically into their lives and their engagement. In the following paragraphs, I explain my methods chronologically from when I started in 2010 to the end of my research project in 2014.

The data for this study are based on four years of research (2010-2014) that included: interviews with Latino immigrant parents, school faculty, administration and staff to understand how Latino parents and school officials negotiate to facilitate the former's involvement; three focus groups with Latino parents and one community forum with Latino parents and the larger community; and a participant observation, ethnography and action research with a group of Latino immigrant parents who were trying to become more involved in a school district of a new immigrant destination.

My study began as part of the 2010 Chicago Area Study (CAS) at UIC.[9] During the 2010 CAS, I conducted twenty household based surveys (of the 1,200 total interviews that were conducted) and I started learning more about the City of Branson Springs. Also, I was able to understand the attitudes of the residents about immigrants and I started creating relationships with Latinos, social service providers, school staff and the community in general. The 2010 CAS experience gave me the opportunity to better comprehend the context of this new immigrant destination and helped me realize the importance of understanding the relationship among Latino parents, schools and the community.

First, during this stage, I partnered with Oasis for Immigrants (a local social service organization that gives services to Latino immigrants in the City of Branson Springs) to conduct interviews with Latino immigrant parents. I used a semi-structured interview guide to understand their engagement (see Appendix A). This guide is similar to the one that many other parental involvement studies used in the past. This first guide was to better understand the

[9]The 2010 CAS was based on household surveys measuring the attitudes of residents in four Chicago suburban localities regarding immigrants and immigration in general.

struggles and experiences that Latino parents encounter in their interactions with schools. I started conducting interviews with Latino parents that were selected through a snow ball sample recruitment strategy facilitated by my partnership with Oasis for Immigrants in the summer of 2010. I interviewed 25 Latino parents, of these interviews many of the parents were not involved, some were until certain extent and many did not even know how to become involved. During these interviews I asked questions associated with cultural capital, parental engagement in the community and schools, and about the services that are needed for Latino immigrants. These parents were a good representation of the community. I interviewed mostly Mexican parents, but I also interviewed a few parents from Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua and other Latin American countries. Most of the parents did not finish high school, but some had obtained GED through classes in the social service organization, through a local community college or through other methods. Two of the parents were 1.5 generation immigrants and finished their degree through the local high school. These interviews provided a representative sample of the diversity and complexities of Latino immigrants in the City of Branson Springs (I will explain this diversity in depth in Chapter 4). In general, many of the Latino parents from this first group had low levels of education and considered themselves not to be involved and did not even understand how to be involved in schools. With few exceptions, many of these parents were confused about the United States educational system and school expectations. Most of them were merely trying to meet basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, and jobs) to survive as new immigrants in a place that did not have the infrastructure or the linguistic and cultural capabilities to help them.

Second, in addition to these interviews, I conducted three focus groups with Latino parent "leaders"[10]during the fall of 2010. The focus groups allowed me to construct a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between Latino parents, the community and the schools. I designed and conducted the focus groups in partnership with Oasis for Immigrants. This organization played an integral part in my research. Thanks to this organization and its executive director, I had access to Latino parents in the City of Branson Springs. They allowed me to use their space to conduct interviews and we collaborated in conducting the focus groups and community forum. Working together with them facilitated trust building and helped me establish legitimacy with the Latino immigrant population because they are a trustworthy entity within the Latino community. The focus groups were designed to learn about the needs of Latinos and to create a better understanding of Latino immigrants in this suburban area. The participants for the focus groups were selected by the social service organization. They invited Latino parents who were considered to be leaders or potential leaders in their current community or in their country of origin. This leadership was viewed through many different scenarios. Some of these parents were engaged at school, church or in the social service organization.

As part of the focus group strategy, in the spring of 2011, I partnered with the same nonprofit organization to organize and conduct a community forum in a focus group format with local politicians, police, local social service workers, and Latino immigrant parents. In the forum we presented our findings from the interviews with Latino immigrant parents, politicians and social service workers. Also, we presented the findings from the three focus groups that we conducted with Latino immigrant parents. This forum was successful (more than 100 people

[10] These leaders or potential leaders were identified by recommendations of the staff of the social service organization and community members as people involved in various areas of the community (i.e., church, school, businesses or the community in general).

attended the forum) and was one of the platforms on which Latino parents built their connection with the larger community.

The main objective of the community forum was to encourage communication between Latino immigrant parents and white residents. The main goal was to begin communication and a better understanding and relationship between the Latino immigrants and the white community. To begin this communication we randomly assigned attendees to sit in round tables and to work together with a bilingual translator to find solutions to the miscommunications among them. Also, they came with ideas and recommendations to increase the understanding among the different groups. The five main themes or recommendations that emerged from the community forum were: education for Latinos parents, youth development, community development and more opportunities for Latinos in the community, communication among the different groups, and accessible health care for Latinos. The goal of these recommendations is to improve the relationship among Latino immigrants and existing institutions (such as schools, businesses, social service agencies).

Third, in the summer of 2011, I joined the 2011 Chicago Area Study (CAS) class. The 2011 CAS built on the research we began in 2010 and was focused on using qualitative methods to explore intergroup dynamics between elected officials and community residents. In this stage, I conducted 20 additional interviews with principals and school personnel (teachers, parent coordinators, school board members, ESL coordinators, etc.) to assess how the staff defines and measures parental engagement, to understand the perceptions that school staff have about Latino parental engagement and the ways in which Latino parents and school officials negotiate to facilitate the former's involvement. I used a separate interview guide (see Appendix B) for school personnel to examine the way they perceived parental involvement among Latinos and

what strategies they are using to try to increase their involvement to allow me to see the involvement of Latino from the point of view of school's officials. These qualitative methods give me a more complete picture of the engagement of Latino parents in the BSSD.

Fourth, in addition to interviews, I became a member of the BPAC and I started a participant observation with them in the spring of 2011. I was able to strengthen my ethnographic data and collect more detailed notes of in-depth observations and conversations with parents and school officials as part of the 2011 CAS. This participant observation continued through the summer of 2014 and I not only attended their regular meetings, but I also went to their cultural activities, workshops and informal meetings in their houses and restaurants.[11] This participant observation allowed me to complement my data from the focus groups and interviews, and to explore deeper into the struggles Latino parents face in interacting with the school system. Using this method, I was able to identify the mechanisms and struggles that Latino parents encounter in their process of getting more involved in schools.

As part of my ethnography/ participant observation, I went to more than 30 meetings with the BPAC. The main source of data from my participant observation comes from the monthly meetings with the BPAC and their activities and events. As part of the ethnography, I also participated in the Illinois Bilingual Parent Summit in 2012 and 2014, and attended the Hispanic celebration organized by the BPAC in 2011, 2012 and 2013. In addition to these activities, I participated in College for Parents and community forums. I visited the houses of Latino parents, had lunch and informal meetings outside of the schools with them, helped with the preparation of art work distributed food, carried chairs, tables or whatever was needed for their major events. In addition, I volunteered as a guitar teacher in the after-school program that Latino parents

[11]Many of these meetings became necessary to stay away from school staff and administration. Latino parents felt the need to have their own meetings to create programs and involvement strategies without the input or intervention of school's officials.

created for the children of the Latino parents who attended their workshops. This after-school program consisted of two hours every Friday of activities for children and their parents (I describe this program more in detail in Chapter 7).

My participant observation was different than most traditional participant observation studies. I combined the observation with action research and I was an active participant on the decisions of the people being observed. I became part of the group and I built relationships beyond the regular subject-researcher interaction. This interaction allowed me not only to create rapport with Latino parents, it also gave me the opportunity to closely examine their lives and struggles. Also, this allowed me to witness first hand their involvement attempts and their dealings with schools, the school district and school staff.

Fifth, I conducted a final round of interviews with Latino parents in 2013 and 2014. These interviews allowed me to explore in-depth the way Latino parents define engagement, the way they became engaged, and how school staff responded to their efforts. I conducted a total of 15 interviews with Latino parents who were more engaged in different areas of the schools. I asked questions related to how they define involvement, how they became involved, and how their efforts were met by school staff. In these interviews, I focused on Latino parents who were already engaged in schools[12] to determine what was different about them and the reasons that motivated them to become more engaged. Also, I explored the changes that they experienced in their transition in the district in the last four years to give me the opportunity to compare their responses with the 2010 interviews to see the differences between the two groups. Also, I was able to follow-up with some of the parents who were part of the 2010 focus groups and see their transformation in a period of four years. Many of these parents are now engaged in the school

[12] I am using engagement based on their point of view. If they tell me that they were engaged, we discussed in which ways and the different kinds of engagement.

and some of them are part of the BPAC. These interviews allowed me to compare the way these parents had developed through the course of four years and to see their growth in this timeframe. Also, these interviews allowed me to comprehend their engagement, their standpoint and engagement styles to a different level.

At the end of four years of research, I conducted more than 50 in depth interviews. I used two separate semi-structured interview guides: one for the school staff and one for the parents (see Appendices A, B, and C). In total, I conducted more than 50 semi-structured interviews, and more than 50 informal interviews with Latino immigrant parents,[13] and 20 interviews with school personnel.

Finally, I also used secondary data to compliment my research. Because of the magnitude of the CAS research project, we collected a vast amount of data as a team. I am using more than 15 interviews with school staff conducted by other members of the CAS team to give me a stronger idea of the perceptions and interactions that school staff has with Latino immigrant parents and their children. Also, these data strengthen my research adding more interviews conducted from other researchers.

E. New Methodology

I used a new methodology that combines a series of in-depth methods to access how Latino parents understand involvement and to measure how engaged they were. First, I used in-depth interviews and focus groups as a point of comparison with previous studies. Using these methods, I was able to ask the questions that the traditional parental involvement literature

[13]After building rapport with many parents for a period of many years. Many of them felt that it was not necessary for me to interview them because I already knew their life. This is not necessary the case, but they refuse my multiple attempts of trying to formally interview them. Anyway, because of multiple informal interviews, meetings and long term relationship with them I became to know the life and struggle of many of these parents and I did not have a need to formally interview them.

normally asks. I asked questions about their involvement, homework help, volunteering at schools, participating in meetings, etc. Second, I asked other set of questions that focus on their understanding of their school systems and the way they are dealing with their children education using their own knowledge. Because my interviews were in-depth, I was able to pinpoint the many reasons that affect the engagement of Latino parents. Interestingly enough, these reasons were very similar to the reasons that most studies have found about the involvement of Latino parents (see Chapter 4).

If I had decided to only use the same methods that most of the parental involvement research regularly used, I would have arrived at same conclusions that most of these studies found (that the engagement of Latino parents is low). Instead, I decided to go a step further and look at parental involvement with a different lens and from a different methodological perspective. I shifted my research methodology to capture the voice of the subjects from their own standpoint and to delve into their struggles trying to understand the United States school system and their role in it. This also allowed me to look at engagement more in depth using a combination of ethnography, participant observation and action research. I used these methods for a period of three years (2011-2014) and I spent many hours with Latino parents going to meetings, workshops, and volunteering in their activities to better comprehend their engagement and to better understand their struggles navigating the school system.

My long-term ethnography allowed me to question the conclusions from my own focus groups and interviews. In some ways, the results from the focus groups and the interviews were incomplete without the ethnography. Without the ethnography, I would not have been able to understand the struggles and the engagement styles of Latino immigrant parents. Future

researchers need to look beyond traditional research methods to expand the understanding and complexities of parental engagement.

1. Action Research

My research has a social justice component and creates social change. I collaborated with Latino parents to obtain access to more resources, more engagement and give them more visibility in a school district that historically ignored them. I carried the tradition of Action Research (AR) to improve the relationship between school staff and Latino immigrant parents. According to Greenwood and Lewin (1998), this type of research creates social change based on the knowledge acquired through research and analysis. Also, this research collaborated with people to create control over their own life and destinies in their struggles against oppressive systems (Greenwood and Lewin 1998). One goal of my research was to encourage more engagement, acknowledgement and more participation of Latino parents in decision-making roles in the BSSD. I collaborated with Latino parents to obtain access to more resources, more engagement and give them more visibility in a schools district that historically ignored them. My research has encouraged more engagement, leadership building, more recognition and more participation of Latino parents in the relevant decision making roles in the BSSD. Also, as a member of the BPAC, I have been able to learn more about parent's rights and to fight along the Latino parents group for their rights and to obtain more visibility and connection to the networks of the decision-makers in the community for Latinos.

2. Critical Race Theory

I also use Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Solórzano 1997, 1998) to understand the intersection of race, class, gender and legal status in the context of

Branson Springs. According to Yosso, CRT is "a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses" (Yosso et al. 2005:96). I use CRT to understand how Latino parents understand and conceptualize involvement when dealing with a school system. To do this, I use the five canons of the CRT: counter-storytelling; the durability of racism; whiteness as property; interest transformation; and the criticism of liberalism (Hiraldo 2010). According to Hiraldo,

> Counter-storytelling is a framework that legitimizes the racial and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups... The permanence of racism suggests that racism controls the political, social, and economic realms of U.S. society. In CRT, racism is seen as an inherent part of American civilization, privileging White individuals over people of color in most areas of life, including education… Due to the embedded racism in American society, Whiteness can be considered a property interest… that operates on different levels. These include the right of possession, the right to use and enjoyment, the right to disposition, and the right of exclusion… Interest convergence… acknowledges White individuals as being the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation… critique of liberalism, stems from the ideas of colorblindness, the neutrality of the law, and equal opportunity for all (2010:53-56).

The five canons of the CRT allow me to assess the voice of the parents and their understanding of involvement from their marginal experiences, and to analyze the role of the schools as institutions that promote racial inequalities and promote white privilege. This challenges the assumption driving many of the studies of schools and cultural capital that I mentioned in Chapter 2. I describe these five tenets more in depth and connect them to my findings in Chapter 7.

According to Yosso (2005, 2006), rather than focusing on deficit, schools should concentrate on the community cultural wealth of families to understand the different capabilities and knowledge that they possess. I add that researchers also need to work from the point of view of the families and communities that they are investigating to better understand their standpoint. Using CRT to analyze my data I can find the place in which theory and method meet. Also, I

can put theory into practice (praxis) and give a voice to Latino immigrant parents, a group that has historically been silenced in the United Sates. Because this methodology makes clear the voices that are normally silenced in qualitative data and can be conceived as a social justice project (Yosso et al. 2005), I use CRT to show the voice of Latino parents and their insights about parental engagement from their own point of view.

F. Subjectivity – My role

My role as a researcher is affected by my standpoint. I am a Puerto Rican male, U.S. citizen, native Spanish speaker, and a PhD graduate student who is studying a group of mostly Mexican women who are Spanish speaking, with low levels of education and some are undocumented. I am also interacting with school personnel who are mostly white, educated and English speaking. This creates a situation where I am an outsider within (Hill-Collins 1986) with the parents' group and with the school personnel. Also, since my fieldwork began with collaborating with the Latino immigrant parents and the social service organization, I became a cultural broker between school personnel and Latino parents. As described above, this research has a social justice goal of getting Latino parents more engaged and their voice acknowledged. Because of my privileges as an educated Latino, I used my standpoint to collaborate with Latino parents and district staff on the context of my research. As a result, my research integrated the data collected to improve the actual situation that I encountered on the field. This does not mean that I am risking the objectivity of the data that I am collecting. This is strengthening my case study and helps me to put theory into practices (praxis). I use that data to make recommendations and to analyze the "best practices" that can be implemented to increase the engagement and encourage better relationships of Latino parents with the district staff.

IV. STRUGGLING TO BECOME ENGAGED

Interviewer: *¿Usted ha asistido a alguna reunión o es parte de algún grupo de la escuela?*
Ernesto: No. Por el hecho de que trabajo casi todos los días, los sábados y en ocasiones los domingos. Pues en si no hay forma de estar con ellos, con un grupo de padres de familias y eso.

(Interviewer: Did you go to any of the meetings or are you part of any group at school?
Ernesto: No. Because I work almost every day, Saturdays and sometimes even Sundays. There is no way that I can be with a group of parents and that).

A. Introduction

Ernesto is an undocumented father of two from Michoacán, Mexico, who works in construction. He wakes up early every morning to take his two children to a private school in a different school district. He thinks that the Branson Springs School District is not a good district because their academic rigor is lower than many other districts in the area. He wants the best education for his children. Even when Ernesto does not have the time to be present in-person at school-sponsored activities, he tries to be sure that he takes them to school every morning and pick them every afternoon after work where they finished their homework in an after-school program. Ernesto's engagement is very impressive taking into consideration that the school is about thirty minutes away from his house and he and his family do not have much money. Ernesto, like many other immigrant parents in Branson Springs makes the education of his children a very important aspect of his life. However, Ernesto's inability to attend meetings or being part of a group at school makes him an uninvolved parent in the eyes of teachers and administrators. Ernesto, like many other Latino parents, struggles with juggling his work schedule, paying the bills, the new responsibilities, the school requirements, and the lack of family networks to support or care for his children and the meet the school requirements. His story complicates the parental involvement literature that describes that Latino parents are the least involved of any group in the United States because it sheds light onto the complexities and

struggles of immigrant life and the conflicts in their interaction with schools. Understanding the life stories of Latino parents who are not involved and parents that are struggling to be involved will expand this literature and will strengthen our understanding of Latino parental engagement. Even when more scholars are starting to look more at the involvement of Latino parents (see Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011, Terriquez 2011, 2012, Lopez et al. 2003, Ramirez 2003), there is not enough research that explores parents who are not involved in depth or the differences between Latino parents who are involved and Latino parents who are not.

In this chapter, I describe Latino immigrant parents in the Branson Springs School District (BSSD). I focus on two groups of parents: the ones who acknowledged that they were not involved and were struggling to understand the involvement requirements and the school's rules, and the parents who were trying to become more engaged, were challenging school's involvement measures and strategies and were devising new engagement strategies and alternatives. This gives me a point of departure to compare non-involved and involved parents to have a more complete picture of their lives stories and to better understand their differences. In this chapter, I also look at the factors that prevent parental involvement among Latinos to see how they affect non-involved and involved parents in the context of a new immigrant destination. This allows me to analyze the relationship of Latino parents with the BSSD and to better explore the relationship between structure and agency. I use semi-structured interviews and many informal conversations with Latino parents complemented by observations made at meetings, workshops, focus groups, and cultural events attended by Latino parents, to showcase the story of those who are struggling in trying to become engaged. I examine their life stories to understand their struggles, their understanding of involvement and their experiences trying to get

more engaged in schools. At the same time, I explain the perception and understanding that these parents have about parental engagement and the struggles that they encounter in their relationship with their children's schools. More specifically, I tell the story of those parents who are struggling to get involved and to understand the United States educational and structural system. These are the parents who do not have the resources, cultural capital, social capital, language skills or even time to attend meetings or parents/teachers conferences at schools. These are the parents who are at the bottom of U.S. highly-stratification system and sometimes live in isolation, disconnected from networks and opportunities.

B. Latino Immigrant Parents

It is impossible to describe Latino immigrant parents in the City of Branson Springs as a monolithic group. In my four years of conducting research I met Latino parents from diverse backgrounds: national origins, education, race, color, religion and legal status. Most of the Latino immigrants in the City of Branson Springs are Mexicans. Many of them are from the Mexican states of Michoacán or Jalisco. Many immigrated through networks that brought them to work in low-skills jobs such as construction, farming, daycare, housecleaning and landscaping in the Branson Springs area[14]. I also met Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorians, Puerto Ricans, Venezuelans, Colombians, Chileans, and Uruguayans among other Latin American migrant groups. While most of the immigrant parents were Mexicans, Guatemalans, etc., all the Latinos in positions of power or "professional" Latinos, were non-Mexican Latinos who were phenotypically white or lighter skinned than most of the Latino parents in the City of Branson

[14] This does not mean that they are staying in these jobs, starting their own businesses and getting engaged on the education of their kids. In later chapters I show how a group of parents that is highly engaged and the ones obtaining more social and human capital are parents with the same characteristics and place of origin of these parents.

Springs. For example, the English Second Language (ESL) coordinators and directors of social service agencies were non-Mexicans, lighter skinned and middle-class Latinas.[15]

Most of the Latino immigrants who came to the City of Branson Springs did so through family or neighbors networks. In this way, some of them had moved their entire family to the City of Branson Springs creating better support groups. Others came either because of the cheap housing, the job opportunities available, or because it was a rural area similar to their hometowns. For example, according to Gabino, the main reason he moved to Branson Springs from another city in Illinois was that this area was the only place in where he and his family were able to afford a house. Mariana from El Salvador, when describing why she and moved from Chicago in 2011 to Branson Springs, mentioned that the price of houses was the main reason, and the tranquility of a suburb away from the city was another.

C. Reasons Affecting Their Engagement

There are many structural and personal factors that limit the engagement of Latino parents in the context of a new immigrant destination. Latino parents encounter many obstacles to school engagement because of their background, race, legal status, gender, education and lack of networks. In addition, some of them do not have a driver's license or cannot drive, others do not speak English or understand the U.S. educational system, many have low levels of education and did not earn a high-school diploma or only have a few years of schooling (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011, Terriquez 2012, Valdes 1996). These reasons are similar to what most studies with Latinos in new immigrant destinations have found. These studies have shown that Latino immigrants encounter many specific barriers that affect their

[15]This finding is similar to other studies of Latinos in the United States that show that light skinned and upper and middle class Latinos tend to be more successful that dark skin Latinos (see Guarnizo and Diaz 1999; Hunter 2007, Pessar 1995, Bonilla-Silva 2004).

integration in new immigrant destinations (see Marrow 2011; Mantero 2008; Gouveia, Carranza and Cogua 2005). These barriers include lack of English language, lack of transportation, working double shifts or excessive works hours, poor quality of jobs, cultural conflicts and discrimination based on race, ethnicity and legal status among others (Gouveia, Carranza and Cogua 2005). In the following paragraphs, I explain the obstacles and experiences of Latino parents in Branson Springs to understand them better and to explore the reasons that are affecting their engagement.

1. Living in Isolation

One of the reasons affecting the engagement of Latino parents in Branson Springs is their isolation from the rest of the community. According to Marrow (2011), new immigrant destinations in rural areas can be very isolating for new immigrants. For example, Manolo, an undocumented immigrant father of 3 (a 17 year old daughter, and an 11 year old son, and an older son who is a high-school dropout) who comes to U.S. for seasonal jobs a few times a year, explained that his family has been socially isolated from neighbors and the community of Branson Springs since 2005. His family is from Michoacán and is the only Latino family in their neighborhood. First, they lived in a small house with little furnishing although a Mexican flag hangs on one wall and a Virgin of Guadalupe painting on another. Second, Manolo explained, they did not interact with any of their neighbors who were all white. This represents a problem for Latinos in new immigrant destinations where they have little interaction with the community or the networks of the white majority. This was also the case for Francia, an undocumented, divorced mother of two daughters, 13 and 18 years old, from Mexico City. She came through a network from her husband's family but after Francia divorced her husband, she lost her only social networks. She found herself living in isolation without any networks or support in the

new destination. This isolation, like Manolo's hampered her involvement in the school and community. The situation of many immigrant women who come following the networks of their husbands is complex. Many of these women suffer from what Collins (1998) refers as the matrix of domination. They are oppressed in multiple dimensions not just for being minority and immigrant; they are also oppressed because they are women. In the cases of Latinas, they are not only oppressed and discriminated by the U.S. educational system; they are also oppressed by their husbands and partners (Garcia 2009, 2012).

The isolation of new immigrant destinations creates many problems and challenges for Latinos which normally they do not encounter in traditional immigrant gateways. According to Marrow (2011), there are many cultural costs to these areas that affect the lives of Latinos negatively by making their acceptance and integration slower. Cultural isolation, traditionalism, conservatism, and racial and ethnic intolerance of long-time residents of rural areas affected Latinos in new destinations (Marrow 2011, Albrecht 2006, Saenz and Torres 2003). This is the case in Branson Springs, in where many Latino parents struggle with the reaction of long-time residents and their involvement is highly affected by their isolation from networks and the greater community. This isolation affects the involvement of parents from the schools and community. For example, when I asked Giselle, a mother with two daughters ages 8 and 15 and one 6-year old son, if she was involved she explained: "*No, yo nunca he podido ir por lo de mis hijos. Es que como nosotros vivimos solos, mi esposo se dedica al trabajo por lo mismo, para pagar todo"* (No, I have never been able to go because of my children. Because we live alone, my husband dedicated his time to work to pay for everything). Giselle's story represents the story of many Latino parents who live in isolation in new immigrant destinations. Her husband worked in a low-wage job without any networks or interaction with the neighbors. Her story

showcases how new immigrant destinations contribute to the disengagement of Latinos from the community and schools. Also, it showcases the complexities of intersectionality where gender, class, race and immigrant status, together with the structure of the labor market, affect the involvement of Latinas. Many Latinas such as Giselle and Manolo's wife have to stay home without a car, have to take care of the children and do not have any interaction with the school or the community outside of their house. This isolation is unique to new immigrant destinations and affects their involvement at schools. The multiple oppressions of women like Giselle are exacerbated when living in isolation and without access to an effective transportation system.

2. Lack of Transportation

Another factor that influences the engagement of Latino parents is the lack of transportation. For example, when I asked Celia (Manolo's wife) why she did not get involved in the schools, she mentioned that she could not go to meetings because she did not drive, and her husband was normally working and using the only car in the household. For many Latina mothers, transportation was a factor: where the family had only one car which was only used by the family member who was working (usually the man). In a similar situation, Francia did not drive and she did not have knowledge of how to navigate in Branson Springs. Evelyn, (a mother of two children) from Michoacán, explained that she left Michoacán in 2005 and had lived in many different cities in Illinois. She came to live in the City of Branson Springs in 2010. Like Manolo, she came through family networks looking for better opportunities for her family. She is separated from her husband and has two children: a boy 15 years old and a girl age 3 who is handicapped and needs special services. Like Celia and Francia, Evelyn does not drive and complains that the bus service in Branson Springs is inadequate.

Many Latino parents in Branson Springs complained that the transportation system was inadequate. Because Branson Springs is a suburban semi-rural area, public transportation is slow and only a few buses are scheduled every day assigned to few routes. In addition, many of the parents who are undocumented were afraid to drive because they could not obtain a drivers' license in the U.S. In addition, in the following conversation Evarista explains what has been the most difficult situation in Branson Springs:

*Evarista: **P**ues lo más difícil es que uno llega y no sabe manejar… y luego que te piden la licencia si te para la policía y pos uno no tiene conque darles, eso es lo más difícil de uno aquí.*

(Evarista: The most difficult thing is that you get here and you do not know how to drive and then they ask you for your driver's license if the police stop you and you do not have anything to give them, that is the most difficult thing here).

Evarista's example of not knowing how to drive or not having a driver's license was similar to the case of many Latino immigrants in new destinations (see Marrow 2011, Albrecht 2006, Saenz and Torres 2003). This affected their ability to attend schools meetings and events. Also, their undocumented status contributed to their fear to drive and their capacity to be more engaged in school activities. This situation changed in 2014 when the state of Illinois approved a law (law SB 957) that allowed undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver's license.

Even when the lack of transportation hindered the involvement of some Latino parents, other parents who did not drive used their networks with other immigrants to get around Branson Springs. For example, Sonia did not drive, but she carpooled with other members of the BPAC to go to meetings or activities. Also, many of the Latino men who work together carpooled to work. This allowed them to leave the only available car at home for others to use. This way, their partners could use the car during the day. Leaving the car behind has larger implications because of the changing gender dynamics that Latino immigrants go through in the context of the

United States. Many of the Latina women are driving for the first time and are challenging their husbands for a more "free" lifestyle in the U.S. Latino men are negotiating their own masculinity with the demands of the new immigrant destinations where good public transportation is non-existent and they need a car. These findings are similar to other studies with Latino immigrants in the United States in where Latinas find themselves more empowered in the context of the new country (see Pessar 1987, 1995; Gramsuck and Pessar 1991, Smith 2007).

3. Lack of English Skills

The lack of English skills was also a barrier for the involvement of some parents. For example, Manolo and his wife used to help their kids with homework but since the kids were transitioned to English-only classes it became harder for them to help. His explanation is below:

Manolo: Este inclusive ahora que tuvieron este año de puro ingles pues se nos ha dificultado tanto a ellos como pues a nosotros. Más que nada a mi pues yo soy que luego les ayudo. Entonces yo le decía a la maestra que yo como le podría hacerle para poder ayudar a mi hijo. Ella me decía que si yo no podía hacer nada y yo no hablaba inglés entonces yo a veces me ayudaba con la computadora. Yo lo ponía en la computadora en inglés y ya le podía a traducir y entonces donde yo me ayudaba pues yo les ayudaba a ellos. Entonces ella me dice que lo que tenía que hacer él es poner atención un poco más en la clase para que él mismo pudiera hacer sus trabajos en la casa. Porque como no hay quien pues hable suficiente ingles así como que sepa. Entonces, él a veces hacia la tarea incompleta o nada mas lo que entendíamos o así entonces él ya decía que tenía que poner más atención.

(Manolo: This year, since they (his children) have pure English, it has been very difficult for them and us, even more me, I am the one who helps them. Then I asked the teacher, "how I can do it? How I can be able to help my son?" She told me that if I was not able to do anything and if I did not speak English, that I can use the computer sometimes. I can put the words in English in the computer and the computer will translate them for me and then I will help them. The teacher told me that he (his son) has to pay more attention in class so he can be doing his homework by himself, because there is not anyone in the house that speaks enough English to know. Then, he sometimes does his homework incompletely or only what we understand and then he says that he needs to pay more attention).

This conversation with Manolo showcases his struggles to help his children with homework because of a language barrier. Students were transitioned from the bilingual program to an English-only program after third grade. This transition not only created problems for the students, it also created problems for the parents, since they did not speak English. Manolo's narrative show how parents struggle with assisting with homework. At the same time, we can see the lack of cultural competency of the teacher who assumed that the family had a computer and could use it to translate from Spanish to English. What's worse, the teacher also assumed that this translation in the computer would resolve their misunderstanding of the English language. This then places the blame on Latino students for their lack of understanding. This is one example of the many stories that I heard from Latino parents about teachers who do not understand their struggles, language and culture.

Manolo's life situation is not unique in the context of my research. There are many other Latinos who struggle with not having the English skills that the school systems required. For example, Francia did not speak English and used her two daughters as translators when she went to school to talk to the teachers or when she needed to talk to any English speaking person in Branson Springs. In another case, when I asked Giselle how she helped her children with homework if she did not speak English, she responded:

Pues a mí no se me hace difícil. Lo que pasa es que aunque no sepa inglés lo trato de leer. Lo leo y ya mi hija o mi hijo me dice como se lee mejor, como se pronuncia. Por ejemplo mi hija la de ocho años me dice "está bien mama no te preocupes, tu lee y yo te ayudo si estas pronunciando bien o estas pronunciando mal". La grande es muy independiente, no me pide ayuda pero en los casos que me ha pedido pues yo le digo que busque en el diccionario. Como ella si – ella nació aquí pero lo que pasa es que ella no fue a pre-school nada más entro directamente a Kínder Garden entonces mi esposo luego quiso que la pusieran en bilingüe, español e inglés porque él quería que aprendiera de los dos aunque nosotros le hablábamos pero que le enseñaran a escribirlo. Ella hasta el Segundo año estuvo en bilingüe. Entonces ella si le puede leer un poco más en español. Aunque ahorita yo creo no tanto, si tiene faltas de ortografía pero lo intenta, lo hace y lee en español. Y entonces a veces cuando me pregunta

algo que yo no sé, le digo que busque en el diccionario o en el internet. Bueno tenemos internet ahorita y ahí busca por ejemplo para hacer sus tareas pero es muy pocas las veces que me pide ayuda porque ella es muy independiente y muy responsable.

(Giselle: Well, it is not that difficult for me. What happens is that even when I do not know English, I try to read it. I read it and then my daughter or my son tells me how to read it better, or how it is pronounced. For example, my daughter, the one who is eight-year-old tells me, "it is ok, mom, do not worry. You read and I help you if you are pronouncing good or bad". The big one is very independent; she does not ask for help but in the cases that she had asked me for help I tell her to look in the dictionary. Even when she was born here, she did not go to pre-school and entered directly to Kindergarten and my husband wanted her to be in the bilingual program, Spanish and English, because he wanted her to learn the two languages, even when we speak to her (Spanish), we wanted her to learn to write it, too. Even now when tries she still commits orthographic errors she still try and she reads in Spanish. Sometimes, when she asks me something that I do not know, I tell her to look in the dictionary or the internet. We have internet now and she can look there to do her homework and there are only a few times that she asks for help because she is very independent and responsible).

Giselle's response shows that even when she struggles with speaking English, she found ways to help her children either by teaching each other or using the Internet when they did not understand something. Giselle, contrary to Manolo, found that the Internet to be a useful resource to help her daughter with homework. The main difference was that Giselle's daughter was in third grade while Manolo's son was in sixth grade and that Giselle had more education than Manolo. This gave her an advantage over Manolo, making it easier to help her daughter with homework. Also, because Internet is not free, it becomes a privilege for some parents to be able to afford it.

Evelyn, who also did not speak English, took advantage of the networks of the Hispanic community and the Hispanic businesses that created a space for Latino immigrants where you did not need to speak English in certain scenarios.

Interviewer*: ¿Qué retos o cosas que se le hayan hecho difíciles en Branson Springs?*

Evelyn: Pues te diré que no casi no porque la mayoría de personas hablan español y hay mucha este como te diré muchas comercio hispanos no casi no lo que se me dificulta un poco más es inglés es que casi no hablo mucho ingles pero aquí no la mayoría (habla español)… y vas a la clínicas y hablan español y si no te ponen un intérprete, o sea que casi gracias a dios no se me ha complicado aquí en Branson Springs mucho no.

(Interviewer: What are the challenges or the things that have been difficult in Branson Springs?

Evelyn: Well, not too many because the majority of the people speak Spanish and there are many Hispanic businesses. I do not speak too much English but the majority speaks Spanish and if you go to the medical clinics and if they do not speak Spanish, they use a translator. Thank God it has not been that complicated for me here in Branson Springs).

For her, lack of English was not an issue. In contrast to Manolo, Evelyn did not feel isolated and took advantage of the services of the community. She was connected to many networks that allowed her to have more access to the services available in the community.

4. Literacy

Another factor that affected the engagement of Latino parents was literacy. Some Latinos parents in Branson Springs do not know how to read or write. For example, Francia is educationally deprived, does not speak English, and is very poor. She explains that this make it even harder for her to understand the English language and to get involved in schools. She was not the only parent that I met that was illiterate. For example, in one of the focus groups, Ramón (a man in his 50s) expressed that he did not how to read or write and wanted to know where he could find a class for parents who are illiterate. These parents felt lost, because in addition to not understanding English, they could not even read in Spanish, which limited their understanding of the United States system and the written material that the school district sends them in Spanish. According to Jimena (a mother of two), Branson Springs needs to…

Tener actividades también como más programas como para los adultos también. Porque hay muchos adultos que están muy analfabetas no, no más un joven se puede preparar también un

adulto se puede preparar pero a veces el por qué no se prepara un adulto porque tiene muchas obligaciones y no tiene tiempo no tiene los recursos económicos.

(Have activities for adults too, because there are many adults who are illiterate. Not only young people can get educated, adults also can get educated because sometimes adults have too many obligations and do not have time or the economic resources).

Illiterate parents struggle because literacy is not one of the services offered to parents in Branson Springs through the schools, social service agencies, or any other agency.

Even when literacy services are not available, some Latino parents and school staff have offered to help illiterate parents. For example, Frida, the school's bilingual parent coordinator, explains one of these cases in where she offered to help to an illiterate parent. She explains:

Ahorita tengo a una señora que le llamé y me dijeron (School District staff) sabes que esa señora llamó que recibió un volante tuyo y que se lo leyéramos, que era de color porque yo siempre los pongo por color ¿verdad? Y le digo ¿por qué no lo lee usted señora? Es que no se leer y entonces yo me ofrecí a enseñarla. Pero no ha tomado la oportunidad.

(Frida: Right now I have a woman and I will tell you about her. I call and they (the school district staff) asked me, "Do you know that this woman called because she received a flyer from you and she wants us to read it for her, that the flyer was a certain color, because I always make them in color. I told her, why you do not read it? She told me that she does not know how to read and I offered her to teach her. She has not taken the opportunity).

In addition to volunteer services by a teacher or a school staff, there are not any official literacy services for the Latino immigrants in Branson Springs, negatively affecting the ability of illiterate parents to become more involved in the education of their children.

5. Legal Status

Legal status also affects the engagement of some Latino parents. Evelyn came with her family from Mexico with a temporary visa and was not able to renew it after two years in the country, and only her younger daughter who was born in the United States is an American citizen. When I asked about the rest of the family, she explained:

Evelyn: No, desafortunadamente no, nosotros entramos con una visa cuando nos venimos y yo estuve yendo cuando tenía que ir y cuando tenía que venir y nada más me llego lo de la niña y se complicó todo ya no pude salir cuando yo tenía que salir. La niña nació aquí yo tenía permiso de estar en este país y cuando nació la niña nació en Julio del 2007 y yo tenía que ir en Julio del 2008 para fuera, pero yo no pude salir porque mi hija estaba en terapia intensiva no podía sacar a mi niña del país entonces yo tuve que quedarme pero como quiera todavía mi visa no está vencida mi visa se me vence para el 2014. Entonces como quiera tengo fe que si algún día hay alguna amnistía o lo que sea que pueda tener perdón porque me quede porque me quede por una razón más grande que yo porque yo no podía mover a mi niña porque mi hija tuvo seis cirugías del junio del 2008 a marzo del 2009 o sea en ese trascurso mi hija estuvo en el hospital y cirugía tras cirugía… yo como me salía yo no me podía salir yo no pude yo tuve muchas razones porque quedarme y por eso me quede pero tengo la esperanza de que algún día pueda tener los papeles yo de aquí y mis hijos también porque incluso la trabajadora algún (social) que yo tengo que es la que me ayuda con mi niña ella me dice que si mis hijos tienen buenas calificaciones y entraron con su visa a la mejor ellos algún día les pueden ayudar con sus papeles.

Interviewer*: ¿Usted nunca ha entrado algún trámite o nada?*

Evelyn: Hasta ahorita no. El nacimiento de mi hija me ha cubierto toda los tres años que tiene mi hija de vida mi hija y cuatro con el embarazo siempre me he dedicado más a ella.

(Evelyn: No, unfortunately, no. We came with a visa and I was going when I had to go and we had to come back. But, when my daughter came, everything got complicated and I was not able to go when I had to. The girl was born here and I have a permit to be in this country and when the girl was born in July of 2007 and I had to go in July of 2008 out (to Mexico), I was not able to go because my daughter was in intensive therapy and I was not allowed to take her out of the country. I had to stay anyway; my visa was not expired because it will expire in 2014. I have faith that someday we will have an amnesty or anything that will pardon me because I stayed largely because I was not able to go because I was not able to move my girl because she had six surgeries from June 2008 to March 2009. During this time my daughter was in the hospital surgery after surgery… and I was not able to leave because of these reasons. For this reason I stay and I have the hope that someday I can have my papers (citizenship) and that my children will also. Even the social worker that I have for my daughter told me that if my kids have good grades and if they came with a visa, maybe they can help them one day with their citizenship papers.

Evelyn's legal situation is complicated and she and her family are in limbo because she missed her opportunity to "fix" her and her family's visa. Her case shows how being a single mother who does not drive and caring for a daughter who has special needs not only affects her involvement at school, but also affect other major aspects of her life, such as her family's

opportunities for legalization. The bureaucracy of the U.S. immigration system affects the whole structure and dynamics of Latino families.

Interviewer: Had you ever have done any of the processes or something (for citizenship)?

Evelyn: Not until now. The birth of my daughter covered me for the three years of her life and four including the pregnancy.

Similarly, Ernesto was also undocumented when he came to the Unites States in the 1980s. He missed his opportunity to legalize his status with the 1986 immigration reform act because a lawyer reportedly deceived him taking his money yet not fixing his legal status. I heard similar stories many times in Branson Springs in which undocumented Latino immigrants were reportedly scammed by attorneys or remained in legal limbo for years. For example, when I asked Miriam if she was a citizen, she mentioned: "*no ya reciente estoy en ese proceso"* (no, recently I am in that process). Many Latino immigrants were in this process for many years without any positive outcome. Interestingly many of these undocumented parents lived in a mixed-status household where some family members were citizens but others were not. For example, Miriam and Ernesto's kids are citizens.

Although lack of legal status hinders the engagement of some Latino parents, it is not an obstacle for all parents. For example, some of the highly-engaged Latino parents are undocumented but they had learned their rights as parents and are advocates of Latino parents in the school district. These parents have discovered that they have rights regardless of legal status and many of them are becoming leaders in the community (see Chapter 7).

6. Generational Status (1.5 Generation)

The engagement of Latino parents is also affected by their generational status. According to Portes and Rumbaut (1991), some immigrants belong to the 1.5 generation. This generation belongs to two counties and two places and often struggle with their allegiance to either country or their identity. Many of the Latino parents who came as children and grew up in the educational system of the United States have a different perception about engagement and about the education of their kids. These parents know English and have a better understanding of the system because of their own experience as students.

Miriam was one of this 1.5 generation children and now is a parent in the BSSD. She came to Branson Springs when she was seven years old, from Guanajuato, Mexico. When I asked why Branson Springs, she mentions: "*porque aquí mi papá trabajaba, aquí era mi papá tenía aquí landscaping so prácticamente hizo aquí todo fue en donde no instalo a mis hermanos y a mi mama"* (Because it was here where my dad worked, it was here where my dad had landscaping business. So, he practically did everything here and it was where he moved me, my siblings and my mother). She also mentions that the only people from Guanajuato are her uncles, parents and a couple of neighbors. Miriam grew up going to school in the BSSD and got pregnant before finishing high school. At the moment of the interview, she was 23 years old and a single mother living with her parents and taking care of her daughter and older brother's school affairs because her parents do not understand the school system and she does not want her brother to struggle like she did. Miriam is also involved in the PTO at her daughter's school. This is in part the result of her going through this same school district in Branson Springs and she has some knowledge of the culture and language that most Latino immigrant parents do not come with.

She talks about discrimination in schools and how gang activity has increased since she was a student, and how she is concerned about the safety of her brother and daughter. In contrast to other Latino parents whom I interviewed, Miriam is a citizen, speaks English, and is involved in the schools for her children and brother because she does not want them to dropout from high school as she did or to have the same struggles that she went through. Also, she drives, is younger (20 years old) and is less traditional than many other parents in the district. She also has strong family and neighborhood ties, and is involved in the PTO in the school that her daughter attends. She not only is engaged in the activities of the school, but she also does homework with her daughter and her brother because her parents cannot help them with homework. One major difference between Miriam and other Latino parents in Branson Springs is that she came to the United States at a young age and was eventually able to speak English without an accent. This gives her an advantage over other immigrant parents who are discriminated against for not knowing English or for having an accent. Also, she understands the school system better than her parents, because of her own experience as a student. Miriam was a high-school dropout, was taking GED classes in the local social service organization, and had plans of finding a full-time job when she earned her high-school diploma.

Another parent, Luis, is a citizen, speaks English, and has a stable job. Luis is engaged in the PTO and in various committees in the school district. Luis is part of the BPAC but does not attend as many meetings as the other because he works two jobs. However, he uses every free moment that he has to go to school-board meetings, and joins committees to defend the rights of Latino parents. Unlike most parents, Luis understands the school system and speaks up in meetings. Yet, some parents from the BPAC see him as too aggressive and disrespectful on his approach, causing tension among some of the parents because of his different style of

approaching school personnel. This has to do with Luis being more assimilated to the American culture than other Latino parents. Even when this tension exists, parents have found ways to collaborate with him and to use his cultural capital in their own fight for rights.

Mariana, a Salvadoran who migrated to Chicago as a child, is also an engaged parent with the BPAC and in one of the schools, in the Parents Café, in one of the schools, and is attending many of the events with other parents from the BPAC. Because of her dominance of English and her comprehension of the U.S. educational system, she is also an asset for the training and engagement of other parents.

In addition to Luis, Miriam, and Mariana, there are other parents who belong to the 1.5 generation. However, most of these parents are not connected to the more traditional Latino parents and are not exactly following their footsteps. Most of these parents are younger, less traditional (regarding religion and marital status) and speak mostly English as does Miriam. These parents are engaged in more traditional ways similar to their white counterparts. Some of the Latino immigrant parents see these parents (1.5 generation) as more assimilated to the U.S. customs and traditions. This affects their relationship and collaboration efforts bettwen them.

7. Self-Blame

Some Latino parents in the Branson Springs School District blame themselves and their co-ethnics for their low involvement. In certain ways, these parents "internalize" the stereotype that Latino parents are not engaged neglect their kids and do not care about the education of their children. For example, in an interview with Mario (a father of 2), he explained: "*yo soy sincero, yo no conozco gente involucrada, porque desafortunadamente los mexicanos no tenemos esa cultura de servir, de ser voluntarios, a nosotros nos ha faltado"* (I am sincere, I do not know

people who are involved, because unfortunately, we Mexicans do not have that culture of serving, of being volunteers, it has been lacking in us). Mario blames other Mexican parents and their culture for not getting involved enough in the education of their children, but he does not see their own engagement with their kids at home as real involvement. He also blames the Mexican culture as mainly responsible for the low involvement and low volunteerism of Mexicans.

Other parents also adhere to the same line of thinking as Mario. For example, in the following conversation, Evelyn explains that Latinos do not pay enough attention to their kids:

Interviewer*: ¿Qué usted piensa en general que los jóvenes necesitan para tener éxito? ¿Usted está diciendo que muchos jóvenes están en high school y es difícil controlarlos. ¿Qué hace falta? ¿Qué pueden hacer las agencias o la ciudad?*

Evelyn: Hay dios mío es que es difícil esa respuesta, porque para empezar para que un niño tenga buenos principios los principios tienen que venir del hogar. Y desafortunadamente esto me duele decirlo pero es así los hijos de los hispanos son los que más desatendidos están, porque el hispano viene de otro país deja sus hijo en la escuela. El papa corre para un trabajo la mamá para otro y los hijos solos. Que hace un hijo solo, lo que puede entonces por eso hay muchos problemas cuando ya están grandes porque ellos no traen el amor de su hogar. Entonces a mí me gustaría no sé qué se pudieran que los papás estuvieran más con sus hijos y pues que hubiera ya más apoyos sicológicos en las escuelas para que ellos no tengan tanto problema del que tienen. Porque también algo que no dije no sé si sea bueno decirse también, dice mi hijo que hay muchos niños de su escuela que se drogan y eso es lo que yo les digo a mis hijos yo jamás le aguantaría alguna cosa así yes que eso es hummm…… Y es por lo mismo por lo que le digo se crían solos. Sus pobres padres tienen la necesidad de pagar su escuela, sus rentas. Que se yo la necesidad no obliga a dejarlos solos, no es porque uno quiera. Entonces es por eso yo pienso que más ayuda sicológica en las escuelas estaría mejor

(Interviewer: What do you think in general that the youth need to have success? You are saying that many youth are in high school and it is difficult to control them. What is needed? What can the agencies and the city do?

Evelyn: Oh my God, this is a difficult answer, because to start with for a child to have good principles the principles, have to come from home. Unfortunately, this hurts to me say it, but the children of Hispanics are the ones that are more neglected, because Hispanics come from another country and leave their child at school. The father runs to one job and the mother to another and they leave their children alone. What do children do alone? Whatever they can and that is why there are many problems when they are bigger, because they do not have the love from home. Then, I would like there to be more psychological help in the schools so the children will not

have as many problems as they do. Because there is also something that would be good to tell you, my son says that are many kids at the school who use drugs. I tell my children that I will never tolerate something like this… This is why I said that they are raised alone. Their poor parents have the necessity of paying for the school, the rent. I know that the need forces us to leave them alone, it is not because we want to. So this is why I think that more psychological help in the schools would be better).

Evelyn's response represented the perceptions that some Latino parents had about their own involvement during my first round of interviews in the summer of 2010.[16] Even when I asked her about the support that parents needed from schools or agencies, she blamed herself and other Latinos for their low involvement. In addition, she explained the many struggles that immigrant parents encounter to become engaged in the schools and education of their kids.

8. Work Schedule Conflict

Work schedule conflicts represented another barrier for Latino parents in schools, especially for Latino men. For example, Manolo works mostly in construction and landscaping, and during the winter he also works shoveling snow. He mentioned that it was hard for him to get involved or to go to any activity or meeting at school because he had multiple jobs and random work hours. Ernesto was in the same situation, because his job and the commute to take his children to schools did not allow him to have time to go to meetings or activities at school. There was a gender division among parents whose work schedules conflicted with school activities: most of the Latino men who were not going to the activities or meetings at schools had conflicts with their job schedule, but the women who were mostly stay-at-home moms were highly engaged and were organizing other parents.

Many Latino fathers who juggled many jobs were engaged in meetings, PTA or in other ways when they had an opening in their schedule. For example, Luis had two jobs and worked

[16]I interviewed most of the Latino parents in 2010 in the local social service agency (Oasis for Immigrants) and I only interacted with them during the interview process.

mostly second and third shifts, depending on the days. Even when Luis could not go to every meeting or be involved during the day at school, he used every free minute in his schedule to be involved. For example, when he could, he would attend the BPAC meetings that tended to be monthly and in the morning, and he was also involved in the PTA in one of the schools. He even changed shifts at work so he could go to the school board meetings when he felt that the decisions of the meetings would affect his children or other Latino students. These meetings are usually once a week in the evenings. Because Luis was the owner of his business, he had more flexibility than some other fathers. Similarly, Gabino attended school board meetings and forums when his job slowed down and he was able to come home early.

The work conflict differs for the mothers. In their cases, they did not face as many conflicts. Many of the mothers who were engaged were stay-at-home moms, worked part-time (cleaning houses, babysitting) or had their own businesses (such sewing, dance instruction, etc.). However, because of the many hats they wore, they also had support groups and networks with other Latina mothers that allowed them to get the information without going to the meetings. These mothers divided the meetings among the group, and attendance was based on interest and availability. Those who went to the meetings then reported back to the group. In addition, stay-at-home mothers had more time to go to meetings and activities during the day when their children were in school and their husbands were at work. They also relied on Oasis for Immigrants (social service agency) which provided leadership training and offered childcare. These mothers also brought their non-school-age children to the BPAC meeting when necessary. However, even when more Latinas participated in school activities at a higher rate than Latinos, the context of Branson Springs created a gender division of labor that not only affected the availability of fathers to partake in the activities at school but also affected the ability for Latinas

to obtain the necessary social and cultural capital. I show this with the following conversation with Giselle, a Latino immigrant mother of two who came in 1990 from Michoacán. She and her family had lived in many cities in Illinois and moved to the City in Branson Springs in 1995 because housing was cheap and they were able to afford a house. Giselle did not speak English and did not finish high school. She was hoping to earn a GED and to learn more English through ESL classes in the local social service organization. According to Giselle,

No, no hablo inglés. Mi esposo si estudio inglés desde México. El sí sabe leerlo y luego escribirlo y hablarlo pues ya lo perfeccionó con su trabajo porque él trabaja con un americano. Yo no hablo inglés porque mis trabajos, cuando yo trabaje hace tiempo, siempre mis managers hablaban español. Una que tuve era americana pero nos hablaba en español. Casi todos los trabajos que tuve nos hablaban en español, las personas, los mayordomos y entonces yo casi no he aprendido mucho inglés. Bueno si he aprendido por ejemplo de la televisión o de mis hijos o de radio pero como no lo practico casi siempre a mis hijos les hablo en español y ellos si hablan inglés por la escuela.

(I do not speak English. My husband studied English since we lived in Mexico. He knows how to read it and speak it and he improve his conversational English with his work because he works with an American man. I do not speak English because all my managers in my jobs speak Spanish, since I came a long time ago. I had one American woman manager but she only spoke to us in Spanish. At almost all the jobs that I had, they spoke to us in Spanish: the people, the butlers, and so I have not learned too much English. I have learned some from watching TV, listening to radio or from my children, but I do not practice. Most of the time I speak to my children in Spanish and they speak English because of the school).

Giselle's explanation summarized the positionality of many Latina immigrants in this new immigrant destination who were excluded from the labor market and by consequence to all the perks that are connected to it. Many of them could not develop networks with the white community or develop their English skills as could Latino males who normally interacted more with English-speaking employers.

9. Gender

The gender dynamics of Latinos in the city of Branson Springs are complex. Some of the families followed traditional gender roles where the women stayed home taking care of the house

and their children, and their husbands went to work. Yet it was mostly these stay-at-home mothers who were the most engaged and become organizers in the community. For example, Maya, a stay-at-home mother of three, organized parents and taught them about their rights. She was also going to meetings with the school board and complaining about the conditions of Latinos in the school district when she felt that they were violating the rights of Latino parents. She sent letters to school officials when she thought that they were not doing the right thing. She was also engaged in her church, teaching catechism, and was one of the parents who was in charge of organizing an after school program for Latino children and their parents on Fridays (I explain this more in depth in Chapter 7). Maya also encouraged her husband to be more engaged helping with their kids' homework and going to meetings and workshops. Like Maya, there were many other Latinas who were highly engaged and were not only bringing their husbands to help but also their siblings, children and extended family. These mothers assumed leadership roles and challenged the perception about traditional Latina mothers. In general, these mothers were leading the movement that was creating more engagement for Latinos and was forcing school officials to recognize this engagement.

In addition to Latinas being more involved, many Latino men were starting to become more engaged in meetings and school activities. According to Macarena (ESL Director), thanks to Frida (the bilingual parent coordinator), more Latino men were concerned with their children's education. She explained:

Macarena: She (Frida) did a lot of the activities with the parents. And the moms loved her for that in terms of working with the moms that way. They need support. And that's something that the parent coordinators in Chicago (pseudonym) do a lot of is actually sit with the moms, like a counseling session, you know, talking to a consultant and just let them vent and just help them from that perspective. How do you – what should we do now? Making them think that it's not that they're stuck in a hole or in a rut. You're a very important piece of the family. And so they really talked to moms that way. And I say more than dads because dads usually don't come in.

But in terms of the dads, they started – when Frida came and we brought in Francisco (a Latino psychologist), then the dads started coming in because there was more of the – now we're going to talk about the families.

Interviewer: And that has more dads involved, now, in the last year?

Macarena: Yes. And that's good because dads need to hear that, too. They do have an important piece besides just making the money, coming home and being like that.

The explanation of the ESL Director showcased how Frida, with other Latinas in the school district, created outreach initiatives to purposively include more fathers. Frida's style of doing outreach to the whole Latino community regardless of gender, generation, age, etc., facilitated the fathers' connection to the education of their children. Also, the mothers from the BPAC learned new outreach strategies that led to their husbands' engagement. The mindset of the traditional gender roles of Latinas changed with their engagement in schools. Also Latino men began to comprehend the importance that they play in the education of their children. Some of these men started to comprehend that they were part of the system that oppress their children and wives. For example, Gabino explained that he never sat down to do homework with his children before he went to the Illinois Bilingual Parent Summit and realized the importance of doing homework with them and explaining to them the areas that they did not know. This was a very important moment for him, because he discovered the struggles that his children encountered dealing with a curriculum that did not take into consideration their language and culture. Also, because he could read and speak English and was good in math, he started building a better relationship with his children than before, when they only saw him as the provider.

In another example, Frida described how some Latino men were changing their mindset thanks to workshops planned by the BPAC and discussions with Francisco, the Latino psychologist. She explained:

Te voy a contar una historia tan bonita que me pasó hace tres semanas. Tuvimos el tema de la violencia doméstica y las estadísticas golpean a los hombres porque el hombre es el que está golpeando. Y entonces dije, habían como ocho hombres y ahorita dije se van a parar y se van a ir porque es un tema fuerte de ¿qué es el golpeador? Y no, mira, se aguantaron. Y luego al final del seminario se paró un señor y dijo, yo quiero un teléfono porque yo soy un golpeador. ¡Qué valentía de ese señor!

(I am going to tell you a very cute story that happened to me three weeks ago. We had the theme of domestic violence and the statistics affecting men, because they are ones who are hitting (their partners). Then, we had something like eight men and I thought that they were going leave because the topic about "who is the hitter?" was powerful, but no, they stayed. At the end of the talk a man stood up and said that he wanted a phone number because he was an abuser. How brave of that man!).

This story is an example of how the mindset changed for some of the Latino men in Branson Springs. Parents from the BPAC collaborated with the coordinator and external resources such as the psychologist Francisco to create their own workshops based on the needs of the Latino community. These workshops, together with the leadership roles that Latinas were taking in the community, were changing the perception of the role of Latinas in Branson Springs.

D. Latinos' Understanding of Engagement

During my first round of interviews with Latino parents in Branson Springs, I asked them: "Do you know anyone who is involved?" "Are you involved?" There were many different and interesting answers to these questions. The situation was complex because the structural position of these parents had and the lack of cultural and social capital for the newcomers in the new immigrant destination. During these interviews with many of the Latino parents who were struggling to become involved or to understand the United States educational system, I discovered that even when cultural capital played a role in their involvement and interaction with schools, social capital played an even bigger role in the lives of these parents. Some of the Latino parents to whom I talked were living in isolation (like Manolo and his family) and did not have much knowledge of school activities or what to do to help their children in schools or at

home. They also were completely isolated from any networks. As a result, they were confused because no one was reaching out to them or attempting to engage them in schools or in the community.

Of my first round of interviews, only a small percentage of parents were engaged in school activities and were trying to support their kids with school work. When I asked about their involvement at home, many of the Latino parents did not find many ways to express their involvement. The parents who were involved at home struggled to understand their children's homework because they did not have the cultural capital or the language skills that schools in the U.S. required of them. Cases like Manolo's show how he was trying, but the school was not helping. Instead of working with the children and families using their knowledge and culture or finding them homework help or support, the school told his son to pay more attention and assimilate faster if he wanted to succeed. This was a situation that arose repeatedly with Latino parents who were struggling to understand the homework or how they could assist their kids with school work. Also, constant changes in the bilingual program confused the parents and did not give them the opportunity to understand how the program worked. After many interviews, I realized that asking them these questions provided only an incomplete assessment of their engagement. For this reason I decided to look at engagement in a different way using the interpretation and voice of the parents.

Asking the questions that the traditional parental-involvement literature used was yielding the same results that other research with Latino parents has shown. The involvement of these parents can be categorized as low involvement if we use traditional measures of parental involvement such as those described in Chapter 2. If we look in a broader context, all the Latino parents that I interviewed came to the Branson Springs area to provide better opportunities to

their children and to give them access to a better education. This was a deep level of engagement because they were abandoning their country and long-established networks to give their children the opportunity to have a better life. Every parent expressed this belief and commitment. However, these parents were struggling to support their kids with homework and to go the open houses and parent teacher conferences at school. Their struggle was the product of miscommunication, misinformation, and their inability to understand the U.S. educational system. The important aspect was that many of these parents were trying to finish high school, learn English, and learn their rights, and learn about the U.S. educational system. To better understand the engagement of Latino parents, I used more in-depth methods (focus groups, meetings, workshops and ethnography) to reveal the complexities of the lives of Latino immigrants and their engagement strategies. I was invited into their lives to have more nuanced understanding in the way that Latino parental engagement comes into fruition in a new immigrant destination. Below I describe the complexities of the engagement of Latino parents in Branson Springs.

E. Engagement Comes with Time

After many interviews and focus groups with parents in 2010, I not only discovered the struggles of many of the Latino parents who were not involved but also another group of parents who were not necessarily involved in the traditional way, but were trying hard and struggling to be engaged. Most importantly, they were eager to learn and to become more engaged in schools, in their kids' education, and in working with other parents to learn the system and to improve their cultural and social capital. I met many of these parents during the focus groups in the fall

of 2010. These parents were not that different[17] from the parents whom I interviewed before, but they were definitely committed to learning more and ready to create a change in the education of their kids and in the school district. Of course, this group of parents was in the focus group because someone identified them as leaders or potential leaders in the community. Also, many of these parents brought their networks with them to this new immigrant destination or connected them as a group during the focus groups, giving them a greater sense of identity as a group in a new immigrant destination.

In the focus groups, I met more than 30 Latino parents. A core group of these parents became the main focus of my networks and interactions with Latino parents in the City of Branson Springs. Some of these parents became the core group of the BPAC. From 2011 onward, these parents became the focus of my research and the representatives of the Latino parents in the BSSD. They became the lens through which I understood how Latino parents comprehend engagement in the school district. Also, in my interaction with them, I learned about their struggles, community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006) and their lives in a new immigrant destination. This group of parents became the advocates for other Latino parents in the district. Thanks to these parents, other Latino parents were capable of increasing their social and cultural capital and using their community cultural wealth in Branson Springs.

There were various differences between these highly engaged parents and the ones whom I described at the beginning of the chapter who were not engaged. These differences were not based on individual characteristics such as class, education, having a driver's license or being able to drive, or their legal status. Even when some of these characteristics play a role in their engagement, there were other factors and several situations that were different for the Latino

[17] They were similar in race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and education.

parents who were highly engaged from the Latino parents who were not. In addition to the social networks that these parents brought with them or created in the City of Branson Springs, they received significant training from multiple sources (social services agencies, statewide workshops, and churches) and their ability to create strong information networks separate highly-engaged parents from the rest. Another important difference was that these parents discovered that they have rights, learned about them, learned to use them and demanded them. Also, when they found a support group, some of the Latino parents (specially the undocumented) started to lose their fear. In addition to all these elements, their patience to wait and learn through the years demonstrates that it takes time in a new immigrant destination for these parents to develop and to learn a new system from a disadvantaged position. Many of the highly engaged Latino immigrant parents know that change happen through a process that takes time. Because I was there for four years, was able to see how their vision has come to fruition. For example, in the Fall 2010 focus groups, these parents mention that one of their goals was to have more youth oriented services, like leadership classes and after school programs. This became a reality only four years later in the Spring of 2014.

As part of my focus groups, I asked Latino parents what, as a group, they wanted for the future. I was trying to make the parents create a vision board of their future using their voice and ideas to develop programs. They gave me a clear inventory that later became an action plan and the main goals for which they were fighting. It was as if they were looking into the future, were predicting it, and were committing to it. Definitely, these parents had agency and demonstrated that part of their struggle was translating their own knowledge and human capital to the new immigrant destination.

In-depth interviews with highly-engaged parents revealed the reasons behind their engagement. According to Maya, Vanesa (an engaged mother) was inviting her to meetings and workshops for many years and she ignored her until now when she (Maya) became more engaged and has been involved in the BPAC for six years. When I asked her how she became more engaged she explained:

Maya: Me empecé a involucrar desde que mi hija la más chica estuvo en kínder. Ahí fue donde empecé a ayudarle a la maestra de kínder a leer con los niños... En el Pre-Kinder y Kinder. Ahí empecé después se fue a primer grado y también empecé ayudar desde mi casa no iba el salón pero la maestra me mandaba trabajo aquí a la casa y le ayudaba. En el lapso de ese tiempo me involucre en el programa de soccer en la comunidad... Pero ya de ahí empecé a agarrar más liderazgo en cómo dirigir un grupo de papás, como platicar con los papás; ahí aprendí bastante.

Interviewer: ¿Eran todos padres latinos o había padres americanos?

*Maya: Puros latinos, eran latinos. Y claro nos dirigía una americana que nos iba a mirar, pero éramos los líderes del grupo, éramos latinos; era mi esposo, yo y otras personas; otros hispanos. Y de ahí nos empezamos a meter más a la escuela porque el líder que empezó lo de soccer era hispano y desgraciadamente no resultó buena persona. Nos empujó pero a su manera, por el lado malo políticamente hablando; siempre buscan su beneficio. Y ya de ahí aprendimos como son las personas por tener un poder y ahí aprendí yo bastante, como tienes que observarte porque uno es muy sencillo, te confías y no todas las personas son iguales. Entonces él en ese tiempo estaba muy metido también en la escuela, él quería agarrar tajada de dondequiera, de donde pudiera; en ese tiempo estuvo con Raquel. Y pues sí, gracias a él nos involucramos más con Raquel(*BPAC parent coordinator*).*

(Maya: I started to get engaged since my youngest daughter was in Kindergarten. That is when I started to help the teacher from Kindergarten reading to the kids. In the Pre-K and Kindergarten. Then she went to first grade and I also started to help from my house. I did not go to the classroom, but the teacher sent me work to the house and I help her here in the house. During that time I got involved in the soccer program in the community and from there I started to learn more leadership: how to manage a group of parents, how to talk to parents. I learned a lot in there.

Interviewer: Were all the parents Latinos or did you have American parents?

Maya: Pure Latinos, they were Latinos. Of course, we were directed by an American woman that went to supervise us, but the leaders of the group, were Latinos: my husband, me and other people; other Hispanics. From there we started to get into the schools because the leader that began the soccer program was Hispanic and unfortunately did not turn out to be a good person. He pushed us on his way to a bad side politically speaking, always looking for his benefit. From that one (the soccer experience) we learned how people are from having power and I learned a

lot: how you need to watch yourself because we are very simple, we became confident and not every person is the same. Because he was very involved in the schools during that time, he wanted to take money from anywhere and everywhere. During that time he was with Raquel. In that way, thanks to him we got more involved with Raquel (BPAC Coordinator).

Maya's story shows the many stages of her engagement. First, she ignored invitations to meetings and other activities for many years. Then she became more involved when her younger daughter went to school. Maya also started getting involved helping the soccer coach. It is important to notice that her engagement came right after her daughter entered school, alleviating her from childcare responsibilities at home during the day. In this experience working with the community she learned leadership skills and at the same time she learned to not trust everyone. By dealing with a dishonest soccer coach, she and her husband developed new leadership skills and connected them with the networks of the BPAC parent coordinator who later connected them to the group of Latino parents in the schools that allow her to become very engaged.

In another story, Vanesa (Maya's mentor) explains her engagement experience:

Vanesa: Entonces yo me empecé a involucrar en las escuelas de Branson Springs cuando mi hijo mayor estaba en tercer grado, y me empecé a involucrar porque una vez escuché una conversación entre él y un amigo que la maestra los desnudo una vez para buscar un dinero que se había perdido. Y yo investigué a mi hijo y me di cuenta que esa maestra abusaba de los niños Psicológicamente y los golpeaba, desde entonces decidí involucrarme para investigar más sobre Eso… Eso sucedió cuando él estaba en primer grado, pero yo me di cuenta hasta que él estaba en tercer grado, porque la maestra los amenazaba que no le dijeron nada a los papás. Y cuando mi hijo José (pseudonym), el que te digo que va a cumplir 18 años, entró el kínder yo me empecé a involucrar más, fue cuando empezó el BPAC y fue cuando yo me empecé a involucrar más.

Interviewer: Y antes de eso (año 2000) no había BPAC?

Vanesa: Supuestamente había un BPAC pero yo nunca había escuchado, porque mi hijo mayor estuvo en el bilingüe y también el menor estuvo un año en el bilingüe, pero yo nunca lo había escuchado… Cuando yo me involucre en el BPAC fue porque mandaron una convocatoria en la Escuela Lloyd (pseudonym) a todos los padres que tenía hijos en el programa bilingüe, que fuéramos. Y fueron muchísimos padres, hicieron como un taller muy bonito, que en cada salón había un tema diferente y hablaron sobre las gangas, hablaron muchos temas muy interesantes y me gustó. Entonces esa noche dijeron que querían formar un comité y dijeron "levante la mano el que quiera" como siempre.

Interviewer: ¿O sea, que antes de eso no había comité como tal?

Vanesa: Supuestamente dicen que sí había pero no estaba formado por padres, que yo sepa no estaba formado por padres. Entonces ahí fue cuando yo levanté mi mano y desde entonces he sido parte del BPAC… En ese tiempo estaba la maestra Noemi (pseudonym), ella era la coordinadora, era una persona bien entregada al 100%. Ella luchaba mucho por los derechos de los estudiantes, sobre todo los de la high school… En ese entonces la maestra Noemi junto con Oasis for Immigrants nos mandaron a conocer más, a clases de liderazgo, nos dieron clases de liderazgo (en Oasis for Immigrants) a todos los que formamos parte del comité.

(Vanessa: I started to get involved in the Branson Springs schools when my oldest son was in third grade. I started to get involved because I heard him in a conversation with a friend that the teacher got him naked once to look for some lost money. I investigated and I discovered that the teacher was abusing them (some students) psychologically and was hitting them. Since then, I decided to get involved to investigate more about that. That happened when he was in first grade, but I became aware of it when he was in third grade, because the teacher threatened them and told them to do not tell their parents. When my son José (pseudonym) the one who is going to turn 18 years old, entered Kindergarten, I started to get more involved. That was when the BPAC started and that was when I started to get more involved.

Interviewer: Did the BPAC exist before that (year 2000)?

Vanessa: Supposedly there was a BPAC but I never heard about it, because my oldest son was in the bilingual program and also the youngest was in the bilingual program one year and I never heard about it… When I got involved with the BPAC, it was because they sent an invitation in Lloyd School (pseudonym) inviting all the parents who had children in the bilingual program. A lot of parents went to the meeting, and they did a very nice workshop. In every room they had a different theme and they talked about gangs and about a lot of interesting themes that I like. That same night they said that they wanted to create a committee and they ask for people to raise their hand if they wanted to be part of this committee.

Interviewer: This means, that before that there was not a committee per se?

Vanessa: Supposedly, they said that there was a committee, but it was not formed by parents, as far as I know it was not formed by parents. That day I raised my hand and since then I have been part of the BPAC… During that time the teacher Noemi (pseudonym) was the coordinator. She was a person, 100% committed. She fought a lot for the rights of the students, especially the ones from the high school. During that time the teacher Noemi, together with Oasis for Immigrants, sent us to know more, to leadership classes, they gave leadership classes (in Oasis for Immigrants) to everyone who was part of the committee.)

Vanesa's story shows the complexities of Latino parental engagement in Branson Springs. She

first became involved because an injustice and abuse against her son and later she became

engaged with the BPAC. With the help of the parent coordinator and a local social service agency, she developed her human capital and learned leadership skills through classes, workshops and trainings. Also, through her participation in the yearly Illinois State Bilingual Summit she had learned more about her rights and the rights of Latino parents.

Vanessa's example showcases an important element that distinguished engaged from non-engaged parents. Engaged parents received leadership classes and trainings through many sources. In addition, they have built relationships with other Latinos and non-Latinos school staff. According to Frida, Latino parents need more leadership classes to develop their leadership. Also, they need to use their agency to be more proactive getting engaged. She explains:

No somos tan especiales ni tan únicos como queremos creer ¿verdad? Los padres de Branson Springs necesitamos clases de inglés pero el BSC (Branson Springs College) ya se las está ofreciendo. Entonces los padres necesitan encontrar los recursos, o sea necesitan aprender hacer más pro activos en buscar recursos, en no darse por vencido y esas son destrezas de liderazgo. O sea, necesitamos equipar a los padres con habilidades de liderazgo porque repito, estas sociedades diferentes, esta sociedad requiere que uno esté más proactiva, más persistente, que toque puertas, que no sea tímido ¿verdad? Yo pienso que eso serían los tres factores que podrían hacer un gran cambio. Que podamos… Porque te digo que el hambre de aprender ahí está, la unidad yo veo a una comunidad unida. Simplemente necesita un empujoncito como que ya nada más necesita… Como que ya están al borde de la alberca y ya nada más necesitan echarse al agua ¿verdad? Así lo describo yo, esa sería mi analogía. Y el empujoncito es mínimo porque ya veo a unos padres tan avanzados en el liderazgo que me da gusto. Aprender el idioma, necesitamos aprender el idioma.

(Frida: We are not as special or as unique as we think, right? The parents from Branson Springs need English classes but the BSC (Branson Springs College) is offering them. Then the parents need to find the resources, this means that they need to learn to be more proactive in looking for resources, in do not giving up and those leadership skills. We need to equip the parents with the leadership abilities, because these societies are different. In this society (in the U.S.), we are required to be more proactive, more persistent, to knock on the doors, to not be as shy, right? I think that there are three factors that can make a big change. That we can… because the hunger for learning is there, the unity is there, I see a united community. We simply need a little push, which is the only thing that we need… Like they are at the border of the pool and they just need to get in the water, right? That it is the way that I described, that is my analogy. The little push

that they need is minimum because I see parents who are so advanced in leadership that it gives me pleasure. Learn the language; we need to learn the language.)

These elements that Frida explains were needed to engaged Latino parents in new immigrant destination. School districts need to find ways to develop leadership classes for parents in addition to the usual GED and ESL classes. These classes together with an acknowledgement of their culture and their knowledge will build better relationships with Latino parents and a higher engagement by consequence.

F. What do Latino Parents Want?

BPAC Latino parents in Branson Springs know what they want and they are pressuring school officials to work with them to understand their engagement styles. As part of their engagement strategy, BPAC parents created a list of concerns that they gave to the superintendent in one of the meetings in 2013. They divided their concerns into five different areas: communication, training, culture, volunteer and general concerns.

In summary, highly-engaged Latino immigrant parents in the City of Branson Springs wanted schools to have more services for them and their children; they wanted to create programs that are more culturally relevant to their children; they wanted to create their own programs; they wanted to learn new skills that would help their children's educational opportunities; they wanted more programs for youth such as drug prevention programs, volunteering (service hours) for youth, youth leadership programs, programs that teach them the application process for college, after-school programs, homework help programs, better lunches at schools, art and music programs, and bullying prevention programs. Interestingly, the services that the parents want first are not for them. They want more services and programs for their

children and they want these programs to help them with their struggle with cultural capital, such as with homework help and after-school programs in art and music. Also, they want prevention programs and more volunteering services that not only keep students busy, but also teach them responsibility and increase they social and cultural capital. The most interesting aspect was that they wanted schools to have more culturally-relevant programs and they also wanted to create their own programs for these children. This was a very important aspect for parents in the focus groups who felt that these programs would reconnect their children back to their roots and will help them fight assimilation. Also, these programs would acknowledge their culture, knowledge and agency.

Latino parents also wanted programs for themselves. They wanted leadership classes; they wanted help recruiting more parents to be volunteers or to get involved; they wanted more human capital, including education, literacy classes, basic classes (pre GED), GED classes, ESL classes, and computer classes; they wanted a workshop that explained the college application process, explain how to obtain financial aid for college; orientation and information about their rights and on how to get more involved with the school board, and PTO; they wanted more parental and police participation; more legal assistance; more information about immigration and more involvement in the community. Basically, they wanted more human capital, cultural capital and more social capital. They wanted to learn the educational system for their benefit and the benefit of their children and they wanted more social capital to connect to the community, the police, the school board, etc. More importantly they wanted to be acknowledged for their knowledge and community culture wealth. Their engagement was directly connected to what do they wanted and this guided their engagement journey in the City of Branson Springs.

V. IT TAKES A VILLAGE

I think it's important that, everyone's heard the phrase, it takes a village. It really does. It takes a village to raise kids. I don't think anyone can think that a school can do it alone. I think it's very egotistical if a school does think that they can do it alone. I know of schools that will turn parents away and say, "no thank you, we've got it covered, we can handle it." I don't think you can handle it alone. It does take a community. I think kids need to see that we stick together. We're part of a larger organization that's called a community, family. If you don't have that, what does that do for kids when they become adults and they don't have a connection to some place? I think that's critical (Interview with Jason, school administrator).

A. Introduction

Jason's metaphor about the village summarizes the role that a community plays in its their children's education and in parental involvement initiatives. He, unlike many other administrators in the Branson Springs School District (BSSD), sees that the family and the community are all part of the same team with schools. According to Epstein (1995, 2009), to foster children's development, we need cooperation among family, school and community. In the case of parental involvement, the most important elements for successful engagement strategies are these partnerships and how they foster communication between parents, schools and the community (Hong 2011, Epstein 2001, 2009). The reality is that parents do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a community and they not only interact with schools but also with other institutions (community actors) that affect their engagement.

In the case of the City of Branson Springs, there are various community actors that contribute to the parental and civic engagement of Latinos. However, not all these actors contribute to the same magnitude or are utilized to the major extent possible. In this chapter, I show how community actors (social services organizations, the Catholic Church, local Hispanic businesses, Branson Springs Library, Branson Springs Community College, and the local police) engaged in partnerships with schools, community and families in the context of this new

immigrant destination. By explaining each actor, I show strategies that were useful in the integration of Latino immigrant parents in schools and in the community. Also, I show the way that these actors working together with Latinos benefit immigrant interests and the objective of the whole community. The constant interaction of Latino parents with churches, social services organizations and other community actors has not only increased their cultural and social capital, it also had started to take into consideration the culture and knowledge of Latinos. Some of these strategies can be used in new immigrant destinations to create effective partnerships with Latino immigrants and the community. In the case of the BSSD, the parental engagement of Latinos is affected by many actors and agencies outside of the schools. Latino parents received more support from social services agencies, churches and local Hispanic businesses than from schools. Below, I explain the role of each of these actors to have a better understanding of their function in developing Latino parents and in creating partnerships with the schools.

B. Social Service Organizations

Social services agencies play a major role on immigrant integration in the United States (Marrow 2011). These not-for-profit agencies normally fill the gaps that the government cannot cover. Basically, they do the dirty work that nobody wants to do. In the case of the City of Branson Springs, the agency Oasis for Immigrants, an immigrant-oriented social service organization, plays a key part in the development of Latino parents. This agency has been instrumental in promoting the parental and civic engagement of immigrant parents, and in the improvement in communication and partnerships between immigrant schools, parents and the community. The presence of this organization is important in this community. This organization serves as the principle cultural broker among the Latino immigrants, schools and the community in general. It serves as a bridge between two racial groups that normally do not interact with

each other, and it is responsible for creating immigrant civic engagement initiatives and for increasing communication between public officials and immigrants. This agency plays a dual role: one is to mediate with the larger community through brokering (they explain Latino immigrants to the white majority and vice versa), and the other is to help to assimilate immigrants into the American culture and society. It helps with the assimilation, teaching parents to learn English, helping them to become citizens, and to finish high school. At the same time, this agency uses their "successes" achieving these goals to portray Latinos as good, hard-working people who are not threatening and are assimilable to the white residents and funders.

This agency is also responsible for running support programs that increase the cultural capital of Latino immigrants. For example, it teaches GED, ESL, computer, and citizenship classes to Latino immigrants. Also, it conducts leadership workshops, voter registration drives and offers immigration advice to Latinos partnering with other organizations. In addition to these services, this organization connects families to other social services in the community. For example, Evelyn explains:

Evelyn: Pues aquí en Oasis for Immigrants me ayudaron de recién que yo me moví para acá me ayudaron con la tarjeta (LINK) las estampilla de comida ya las tenía acá aquí me ayudaron con la tarjeta (LINK) y pues hasta ahorita nada mas eso he pedido y me ayudaron con este regalos poquitos en diciembre para mis hijos de Community of Hope (pseudonym) de Springfield (pseudonym).

Interviewer: ¿De Springfield hasta acá les trajeron todo?

Evelyn: De aquí yo hablé a Oasis for Immigrants y de aquí me canalizaron para allá y ya de Community of Hope ya llamaron a mi casa y ellos vinieron a la casa y me llevaron los regalos los juguetes pues para mis hijos, pues ya no juguetes ya mis hijos tengo el de quince y la niña de trece ya no están muy chicos que digamos… ya les dieron ropa y cosas que ellos necesitaban.

(Evelyn: Here, Oasis for Immigrants helped me. Since I moved here they helped me with the LINK card, I already had the food stamps and they helped me with the link cards and until now only. They also helped me to get some little gifts for my kids from the Community of Hope of Springfield (pseudonym) in December.

Interviewer: Did they bring you everything from Springfield to here?

Evelyn: I talked to Oasis for Immigrants and they directed me to Community of Hope. They called me at my house from Community of Hope and they came to my house. They brought me gifts for my kids, not toys, because they are older. My son is fifteen and my daughter is thirteen and they are not too little... they gave them clothes and things that they needed.

Evelyn's experience shows how this agency relies on its networks to help immigrant families and families living in poverty. They connect immigrants with health insurance, with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, the Illinois Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assisting with utility bills and with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, among other services. These services help not only the Latino immigrant population but also any families who are living in poverty in Branson Springs. The services of this organization are necessary because they help Latinos tremendously and play a significant part in the development of Latinos. These programs, when combined with leadership workshops, create a comprehensive activity package that helps Latino immigrants improve their self-esteem and self-concept. These programs working together give hope and encourage the potential of these parents who had been abused and abandoned by a whole system historically.

Oasis for Immigrants also has a preschool program that teaches basic language and academic skills to children before they enter preschool in the Branson Springs school district in an attempt to level the playing field for Latino children. According to Farkas (2003), Latino, American Indian, and African American children lag behind Asian and white children in school readiness and this disadvantage widens as children progress through school. For example, "whereas African-American children begin elementary school approximately one year behind Whites in vocabulary, and knowledge, they finish high school approximately four years behind Whites" (Farkas 2003:1126). This creates a scenario where many kids from low-income and

non-white families, such as Latino immigrants, are not allowed to move up in the stratified system because they do not have the means to obtain the cultural capital that schools in the U.S. value (Rueda et al. 2007). Oasis for Immigrants is making an effort to give access to this cultural capital to a few Latino children. Currently, the program only serves a small number of children but it is seeking to expand in the coming years.

This agency also had programs that tried to improve the health of the Latino community. One of these programs, Healthy Latinas, trained women on a health-based curriculum. At the end of the program, they became the teachers who then taught other Latina mothers health-related information. This program was effective on two fronts: it improved the health of Latino parents, and it developed leadership among parents. For example, some of the Latino parents from the focus groups became teachers in this program. Another health program that this agency was responsible for was a new health clinic in the local high school that conducts free health assessments for the high-school students.

Another important aspect of this organization was that it also collaborated with the schools co-sponsoring back-to-school fairs, health fairs, and other services to all parents of the school district. Because Latino parents are the majority, they benefit the most from these services. Oasis for Immigrants serves as the main cultural broker between the Latino community and other community actors. For example, in the back-to-school fair, Latinos have the opportunity to learn about different services in the community with other social services organizations, with police, private companies, and politicians among others. This not only became a place where they could connect to services, but Latinos could also network and connect with elected officials (such as state representatives, township supervisors, and senators) who would talk to them and give them information. According to David:

Bueno, gracias a Dios yo le voy a dar crédito a Ramona (director of Oasis for immigrants) porque Oasis for Immigrants ha sido yo creo la única non-profit que ha estado enfocada con la comunidad latina o inmigrante. Ella empezó a trabajar con el distrito como un grupo que se llama (BPAC) Bilingual Parents Association Committee y formularon ciertos conceptos de que la escuela podía adoptar como College for Parents, educar a los padres de cómo ayudar a los niños. Programas después de la escuela para involucrar a los padres también, como tratar de tener una conversación con la comunidad o entender a la comunidad general de como a nosotros a veces nos gusta que haya comida cuando hay una reunión, eso sí los atrae porque en los países de nosotros así es que nos reunimos ¿verdad? Entonces Oasis for Immigrants le ha ayudado al distrito empezar entender a la comunidad latina, en vez de empezar con la junta educativa ha empezado con grupos comunitarios educando el distrito escolar.

(Thank God, I am going to give credit to Ramona because Oasis for Immigrants has been, I think, the only non-profit that has been focused on the Latino and immigrant community. She started to work with the district with a group that is called the Bilingual Parents Association Committee (BPAC) and some concepts were formulated that the school can adopt something like a College for Parents, to educate the parents in how to help their children. After-school programs to involve the parents too, how to have a conversation with the community or understand the community in general in how we sometimes like that there is food when there is a meeting. This attracts us because in our countries, that is the way that we meet, isn't that right? True? Then, Oasis for Immigrant has helped the school district to start to understand the Latino community. Instead of starting with the school board it started with community groups starting the school district).

David's reflections about this agency were echoed by many of the school staff to whom I talked, who only knew the Latino community through the work of Oasis for Immigrants. One of the major strengths of this organization was that it brought together different actors and networks to develop Latino parents in the City of Branson Springs. This development was important in the engagement and visibility of Latinos immigrants because it gave them the necessary tools and networks to start to be established in the new immigrant destination.

Even when not all the Latino parents agreed that this organization represented them,[18] many of the Latino parents were receiving services through this organization. The impact that this organization has made was also evident by the fact that all the Latino parents that are highly

[18] Some of the highly engaged Latino parents feel that this organization has not done enough to fight for their rights. They feel that the organization pays safe and does not want push the school district enough to give more access to Latino parents. Also, some of these parents feel that the organization also used them when they need them and ignored them when they need "real" help.

engaged had received some kind of services through them in a given moment. For example, Vanesa, a highly-engaged parent (see chapter 4) explains: *"yo también fui voluntaria de Oasis for Immigrants, cuando empezó Oasis for Immigrants, fui voluntaria. Allí empecé mis clases de GED"* (I was also a volunteer in Oasis for Immigrants when they began. It was there where I started my GED classes). Vanesa was one of the main Latino leaders in the Branson Springs area, and began her involvement and leadership through classes in this organization and later expanded this engagement through the BPAC. In addition, she continued learning leadership and parents' rights through College for Parents workshops and the yearly Illinois Bilingual Parent Summit.

Other parents felt that even when Oasis for Immigrants was doing well, they could still have done more. For example, Antonio explains:

Yo pienso que Oasis for Immigrants tiene muchísimo que hacer para la comunidad. Tener comunicación con la gente, apoyarla. Yo creo que no importa cuál sea su estatus legal en este país, como una comunidad dar ese servicio a la humanidad. Pienso que debe de aportar muchas cosas y desde luego que la comunidad debe apoyar a Oasis for Immigrants como el aspecto de ser voluntario es una acción para nosotros, apoyarlos en muchas actividades.

(I think that Oasis for Immigrants has a lot to do for the community, having communication with the people, supporting them. I do not believe that should matter their legal status in this country, as a community to give that service to humanity. I think that it should contribute a lot of things and of course that the community has to support Oasis for Immigrants being volunteers, this is an action for us, support them in many activities).

Antonio not only mentioned that this agency needed to do more for the immigrant community, especially the undocumented immigrants, but that he wanted immigrants to do more for the organization, also, such as volunteering. He sees the relationship between this agency and immigrants as a symbiotic relationship in which both parties benefit.

Another social service agency that played a role in the engagement of parents in Branson Springs is Social Services United (SSU). Even though this agency played a minor role in their

interaction with Latino parents, their counseling and support programs for families and for youth was useful for the accumulation of social emotional capital of the Latino youth and families. This agency has a series of intervention programs in substance abuse, domestic violence and restorative justice for youth. Schools in Branson Springs partner with SSU to refer students who are having behavioral problems or substance-abuse problems. According to Juan (one of the few Latino administrators),

> I think right now we're starting to put more things into place, more systems into place to help these kids. Um, some of the resources we do have, you know we try to call on, uh, you know, community resources like we have that Social Services United program that can help kids with drug and alcohol abuse, uh, decision-making skills. You know, those are the outside resources that we are trying to take full advantage of. Um, but again, like I said, we're looking at the infrastructures that we have here within the building to figure out, okay, we may not have all the money to do all these programs but what is it that we can do as a building here inside to help these kids.

This administrator accepted that the school did not have enough resources to service the growing needs of the community. He explained that using community resources alleviated the situation (behavioral and substance-abuse problems), but more services were still needed.

In addition to intervention programs, Social Services United had after school programs that helped with homework and tutoring students who needed academic support. In my interviews with Latino parents, some mentioned that their children benefited from the after-school programs with Social Services United. These programs supported parents by assisting their kids with homework and feeding them because they stayed more hours at the school. This was an important element of this program because many students in the BSSD were below the poverty line and received free lunch at school. The after-school programs from Social Services United were funded by a grant from the state and helped students who were struggling academically.

There programs operated Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at one of the elementary schools, and it was based on homework help/tutoring, social-emotional development, and other enrichment activities. These after-school programs were an important asset for minority and low-income families, especially in the context of a new immigrant destination where not too many services are available.

Social Services United (SSU) also had after-school programs at the high-school and middle-school level. When I asked administrators about the school's after-school programs, SSU was mentioned as the main partner in running the programs. For example, according to Kenny, "Yes, there are a couple after-school programs that we have. One is the Social Services United A-plus program which provides the kids an hour of social skill type pieces and then they do academics, and they hire our teachers to facilitate the learning aspect of it." An administrator from a different school, Barkley elaborates: "We have a number of after-school programs. We have the A-plus program which is a homework program run by Social Services United, which primarily helps kids with their homework, provides a snack and provides social activities until about five-thirty every night." This program helped Latino parents because it provided a space where students were supervised and focused on school work while their parents worked late. To have such a space while Spanish-speaking parents worked at low-salaried jobs also became a space where the children could develop the social and cultural capital that would ensure academic achievement. I argue that disseminating knowledge of the benefits of the program is the responsibility of the schools with whom SSU partnered.

In addition to these programs, there were other support programs for students that were struggling academically. According to Macarena (an ESL director),

We have the Afterschool Program (pseudonym) that services students who are having difficulty in reading – in academics, primarily reading and so this is – well, this year, and I don't know how it's going to work next year, but for this past year, students got here at 6 a.m. They were provided breakfast. It was a social activity in the morning and then in the evening – and this was only one day a week. In the evening, they had their tutoring session. They had dinner with their parents and their teacher and during.

Interviewer: It's only one day then they do – it's until what time they are here in the afternoon?

Macarena: 6:00 p.m. So from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Yeah, that's a long day, but then the parents also have some parent-education classes. So not parenting classes because we were calling them parenting classes, but the parents were like getting offended. So it's like they had workshops on how to do different things. So the parents got classes for 45 minutes. There was daycare so that they can come, go to class, leave their kids with the daycare and then after the parents and students were done with whatever they needed to do, then they all had dinner together.

Interviewer: Any other kind of after-school they have that's like a regular one?

Macarena: That was for elementary, not for kindergarten, just first through fifth. At the middle school, the teachers provide I forget what the name of the Early Birds (pseudonym) or Early Morning whatever. So they have that provided once a week on Wednesdays for those students, middle-school students and after school, the students are in sports or doing other things. So it's just in the morning. At the high school, only when they ask for it I guess, like if the students go and I think for our ELL students, the teachers, the ELL teachers are more willing to give up their time to help the kids out.

Interviewer: Okay. But it's more with the teachers' extra time.

Macarena: Yeah…

Macarena's explanation of the programs shows program complexity and variation. These programs not only benefited the children but they also benefited parents through workshops and parenting classes. In addition, some of the grant-based programs required parental involvement. It was interesting that some teachers also conducted their own programs to support the students both before and after school. These programs helped students and their families by giving them more support and tools to succeed academically. Together with other social services in the community, they benefited the advancement of Latinos in Branson Springs. However, many of these programs only helped Latino families and their children temporarily. The problem was

that many of these programs were funded by short-term grants that lasted for a few years that were not self-sustaining. The vulnerability of the programs made the already-vulnerable Latino immigrant parents more vulnerable because they would lose access to the services that would have offered academic support for their children.

Based on the differences between Oasis for Immigrants and SSU, I argue that the work of social services organizations together with schools and other community partners benefit the engagement of Latino parents. Many of the Latinos parents whom I interviewed benefited from the services of one or both of these organizations. For example, Francia's family had benefited from both organizations. Her two daughters participate in the after school programs of the SSU and Francia herself is taking ESL classes in Oasis for Immigrants, and when she finishes these classes she is going to take GED classes if they become available. These services have been of great benefit to her family because she does not understand English and cannot help her daughters with homework. Thanks to these services, her daughters can finish their homework and she can learn English.

Francia's story shows how adult education specific services helped her, but also highlights the limitations. She was learning English in Oasis for Immigrants and her two daughters were receiving homework help through Social Services United at the schools. At the same time, she wished that she could have been able to take GED classes, but the agency did not allow students to take two classes at the same time because of the high demand and long waiting lists. For this reason, some of the Latino parents are taking GED and ESL classes through the local community college.

C. The Catholic Church

While my fieldwork did not include faith-based organizations, respondents' discussion of them highlighted the active status within the community framework I discussed above. Most of the Latino parents in Branson Springs are Catholic. In general, church plays a major role in their interactions with each other, networks among them and availability to go to meetings or activities at schools. For example, parents sometimes missed meetings, activities or forums because of their church involvement. Some of the parents participated to church retreats or volunteered at the Church. For example, Maya and Vanesa taught catechism and volunteered at the church retreats.

The Catholic Church played a significant part in the engagement and growth of Latino parents in Branson Spring. According to Davis, Martinez and Warner, "… the Church calls parishioners to duty and service as citizens even when formal paths to citizenship are barred. "Being a good Christian" means being engaged civically, just as for many law-abiding yet progressive priests and bishops, it means placing social justice and human rights above the letter of immigration law" (2010:89). The Church was a place where the skills, culture and values of Latino parents were highly valued. Some of the parents had leadership roles in the Church before they became more involved in schools. These parents have been able to transfer leadership skills and networks from one organization to the other. They used the Church to build community and have been able to create strong networks among them. Latino parents know that in church, they have a central gathering place for the Latino community in the City of Branson Springs. According to Luis, one of the highly-engaged parents in the schools and church, the parish pastor did not want him to make any announcements or distribute flyers in church about his activities and meetings in schools but he and other parents did anyway. The practice then became

institutionalized. This practice had been used to parents' advantage because many of the parents used these networks to distribute flyers and invite other Latino parents to school activities, forums, workshops, meetings and especially to the events organized by the BPAC. Highly-engaged Latino parents become leaders in the Church and became leaders in the school or vice versa. They were transferring their leadership to different platforms and using their knowledge to teach other parents.

According to Davis, Martinez, Warner (2010), churches can provide give a space for parishioners to promote initiatives and political actions. "These actions build the foundations of substantive citizenship – that is, civic engagement, activism, and an accompanying sense of being a stakeholder in the larger system" (Davis et al. 2010:87). Latino parents also use the Catholic Church to create more conscience among the Latino community and to let them know about the injustices against immigrants that are happening in the schools district and in the City of Branson Springs in general. Also, they use church to support each other and to build community. For example, a group of parents from the BPAC went to church to be with Sonia after she was done attending her retreat as a proof of support. This shows the support that this group had even outside of the schools, and how they were extending their networks and families through relationships with other Latinos in church. Many of the Latino parents who were involved were related through relationships of *compadrismo* extending their networks and creating a stronger Latino community.

D. Hispanic Businesses

The success of the activities of the parents of the BPAC would not have been possible without their networking or support of local Hispanic businesses. This networking had been very

successful thanks to the work of Frida (Bilingual Parent Coordinator) and the parents of the BPAC. Since Frida's arrival, the support from the local businesses have increased enormously in part due to her great ability to do marketing, because she was a great communicator and networker and because she used the Latino community's cultural wealth to create relationships. She made great efforts to visit and invite Hispanic businesses to the activities and to support BPAC activities. Also, she took parents with her to model for them how to build these kinds of relationships so that they would later became sustainable by themselves.

The Hispanic businesses contributed by donating food, products, space to put flyers, space for meetings and networking in exchange for free marketing and free exposure to the BSSD Hispanic Community. In addition, local DJ services, a Latin dance instructor and artistic performers gave free services for the activities of the Latino parents and their children. These small-business owners had created a great relationship with the Parent Coordinator and the parents of the Latino parents group. These businesses were included in the activities flyer (that were also donated) and received greater exposure to the Branson Springs community; this was helpful to their business. Interestingly, these relationships and networks did not transfer beyond this group to other activities in the rest of the school district. These networks were built during many years and are based on trust, cultural and language similarity, shared struggles and solidarity, and were strengthened through their partnerships and networks.

Non-Hispanic businesses were struggling to obtain access to the networks of Hispanic Business. In discussions with local business owners, they explained that the local chamber of commerce and mayors did have too much involvement from local Hispanic businesses in their local chamber. Many of the white business owners did not have any idea about how to offer something of value to the relationship to Hispanic business owners. They were asking the

Latinos for advice on how to engage Hispanic business owners because there is a disconnection with larger businesses and Hispanic-owned businesses. Non-Hispanic business owners were struggling to try to determine what kind of incentives would motivate Latinos to come to their meetings. However, parents from the BPAC did not struggle with motivating Latinos to come to their meetings. They created a win-win scenario where both parents and Hispanic businesses benefited from the relationship and created a better and stronger community. At the same time, they expanded and consolidated their networks.

In addition to local businesses, and thanks to the networks of the parent coordinator and the parents of the bilingual parents group, outside players like Bimbo, Univision, and other major Hispanic companies donated products or news coverage to some of the events and activities. Also, the parents had been able to network with agencies and groups from other cities in Illinois and Wisconsin to use professional artistic presentations. The artists were paid, but BPAC used money from their limited budget because they wanted to bring Mexican cultural traditions to the Branson Springs School District and expose the children to these traditions. Latino parents explained that exposing their children to these traditions was one of their main goals as a group. These traditions are the glue than bring together the Hispanic community and the Hispanic businesses in a celebration that builds a greater Hispanic community and identity. They recognized that teaching their cultural traditions would help them fight assimilation and would allow their children to stay connected to their roots and Latino identity. These activities also became a forum for local artists and students to showcase their talent.

Hispanic Businesses also had become one of the main areas to disseminate information to Latinos. For example, every time parents from the BPAC sponsored activities, they created flyers and distributed them in stores. The stores would display them on their walls which was

one of the best methods to reach out to the Latino community in Branson Springs. In this following conversation I demonstrate this approach:

Interviewer: *¿Cómo se enteró usted del programa de inglés que estaba en la escuela? ¿Le enviaron una carta lo envidaron se enteró por los otros padres o algo así?*

Evelyn: *Ummm…… es que ya no me acuerdo, parece que hay papeles en las tiendas en donde habla de clases de inglés gratuitas en tal parte, o así fue como yo me entere y también mi hermana me lo dijo.*

(Interviewer: How did you learn about the the English program that is in the school? Did they send you a letter, by other parents, or something like that?).
(Evelyn: I do not remember I think that there are flyers in the stores that mention that there are free English classes in different sites, that was how I found out. Also, my sister told me about it).

Evelyn's experience was very similar to other Latinos in this community who got most of the information about activities in stores or by word of mouth from family or friends. These methods have proven to be more effective than sending letters home with their children or putting the information on the school website (which were the traditional methods that schools still used in Branson Springs). In another example, Giselle explains how she gets information at local Hispanic stores.

Interviewer: ¿Sabe si la escuela tiene algún programa que tenga que ver con inmigración?

Giselle: Nada más si he escuchado que por ejemplo algunas panaderías o algunos negocios para los hispanos dan la noticia de si va haber marcha para inmigración. Si he escuchado eso, no precisamente de mis amigos, nada más he visto y leído en algunos negocios que ponen que si usted quiere ir a marchar a tal día a qué hora y que va a haber servicio de autobús y todo eso.

(Interviewer: Do you know if the school has a program about inmigration?).

(Giselle: I only heard that, for example, some of the Hispanic bakeries or some of the Hispanic businesses announced that there was going to be an immigration march. I had heard that, not exactly from my friend, I only had seen and read it from the businesses that had flyers that if you wanted to march this day and time and that there was going to be bus service and all that).

Giselle, like Evelyn, got information about community and immigration events in the stores. Latino parents in Branson Springs were very successful networking with Hispanic businesses to spread the information in part a result of the work of the highly-engaged parents who volunteered their time to distribute flyers in the community and to talk in person to other Latinos and to store owners. This became even easier when more Latinos than non-Latinos owned businesses and when many of them had children in the Branson Springs school district, too. In this way, the Latino community was successful working together for the benefits of all children.

E. Other Community Actors

In addition to social services agencies, Hispanic businesses, and the Catholic Church, there were other community actors that helped in the development of the Latino community. One of these actors was the local library. The local library offered ESL classes for parents and activities for the children. In addition, they added a large section of Spanish-only books that Latinos could easily access. Many of the parents who could not take the ESL classes in Oasis for Immigrants could take them at the library. For example, Jimena explains: "*pues no hay, yo pienso que no hay muchos (programas) bueno está el Park District que a veces da programas como para los niños también en aquel entonces también la librería que les dan clases a los adultos de inglés*" (I think that there are not too many programs. We have the Park District that sometimes has programs for children, too. The library also used to have adult ESL classes). Jimena shows that she knew where the services were. Even when the Park District had many programs for children, however, many of the low-income parents could not afford these programs.

Another community actor that was contributing to the development of Latino parents was Branson Springs Community College (BSCC). This college, in addition to being the first higher-

education option for Latino students in the City of Branson Springs, also offered GED and ESL classes, key courses for Latino parents. This college partnered with Oasis for Immigrants and offered classes at the social service organization, giving the option to parents to have a more varied schedule offering classes in the morning when their children were in schools. BSCC offered a more varied schedule of classes at their campus because they had more space than did Oasis for Immigrants. In addition, on occasion, they had offered the GED and ESL classes at the local high school during after school hours.

I started this chapter with a quote from a conversation with Jason and the widely-known saying that "it takes a village to raise a child." I demonstrated in this chapter how a community tries to come together to not only raise children, but also to accept and work with Latino parents for the development of these children and their family altogether. When I asked Jason to give me a specific example of how it took a village, and his opinion about the sense of community, he provided the following information:

Interviewer: What do you think of the sense of community here in this area?

Jason: I think it's growing. I think it's growing.

Interviewer: Do you feel that there's a great sense? Are people really helping each other around here?

Jason: Absolutely, absolutely. We had a family in need this year. Every time I have a family in need I can reach out to the community, to Oasis for Immigrants, to the school board, to the whole entire Branson Springs school district. People step up and support the people in this community. We have a great relationship with the Branson Springs Police Department. They come in and run our fifth grade D.A.R.E Program, the drug and alcohol program.

Sadly, Jason's understanding of how to deal with Latino families was an exception among administrators and even when there were many community actors servicing Latino immigrants,

the services were not necessarily connected. This situation was improving every day with more Latinos connecting and sharing networks among them and with many of the community actors, which will be a key component in the future for a larger engagement of Latinos in the schools and the City of Branson Springs in general.

In conclusion, the constant interaction of Latino parents with schools, churches, and social services organizations has increased their cultural and social capital, which is an important element in the context of a new immigrant destination. Their participation in programs like GED and ESL for example has not only taught basic reading, math and English, it also has made them part of a community and has given them a new identity and allowed them to created networks with peers and teachers. Also, activities such as the community forum helped them to build networks with politicians, police, and school administrators among others. According to Rick (school administrator), this is what is needed to increase the participation of Latinos. He explains:

> It needs to be community officials, school officials, and other organizational officials. They need to do a better job connecting with the faith-based community, churches, because people do attend churches and those are a good source of connection; I do not think you are going to have a productive community until you make those connections and get more participation of Latinos in leadership levels.

This participation of Latinos in leadership levels across organizations together with their connection to networks is improving the Latino parental engagement in the City of Branson Springs. These can be understood as small steps, but little by little these moves have allowed them to increase their networks, visibility, and exposure to opportunities available to them in Branson Springs. This is what Small (2009) refers as unanticipated gains that people obtain from organizations.

VI. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOLS

A. Introduction

Studies on parental involvement do not pay enough attention to the role that schools play on the engagement of parents. As explained in chapter 2, many scholars use a cultural deficit approach to explain the low involvement of minority parents and focus on blaming the parents for their lack of involvement and ignore the way that the bureaucracy and the structure at the schools affect the way families are integrated. Also, they ignore the role that school officials' bias and colorblind practices play in the education of minority students and engagement of minority parents (Orelus 2010, Moll et al. 1992, Terriquez 2011, 2012, Yosso 2005, 2006). Even though racial discrimination and segregation has decreased throughout the years in U.S. schools, colorblind racism continues to play a role in the opportunities given to minority students and their families (Bonilla-Silva 2010). According to Freire and Macedo, "the political nature of schools is to give a superficial appearance that education serves everyone, thus assuring that it continues to function in the interest of the dominant class" (1987:122). This superficial appearance affects the way Latino parents relate to mostly white school staff. In this chapter, I explain how this superficial appearance together with colorblind practices in the Branson Springs School District affected the engagement of Latino parents.

The engagement of Latino parents is affected by many structural, historical, cultural and contextual factors in Branson Springs. The cultural understanding of engagement from Latino immigrants does not fit the context of U.S. schools, and the rigid structure that schools use to measure engagement does not allow the engagement styles of Latino immigrant parents and underestimates their efforts (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011,

Terriquez 2011, 2012, Lopez et al. 2003, Ramirez 2003). These factors along with colorblind ideologies continue to be used by teachers and administrators who see minority parents as deficient and do not see their culture and engagement styles at the same level as those of white parents.

In this chapter, I explore schools. I find that they are one of the many structural factors that can hinder the engagement of Latino parents. I found it necessary to have a more nuanced comprehension of the role that schools play on Latino parental engagement. Interviews with school administrators, teachers and staff provided me with a better understanding of the initiatives and approaches being used to engage Latino parents and of their role in encouraging or hindering this involvement. Additionally, I employ deficit theories, racialization theories, colorblind racism theories, assimilation theories, and "top-down" approaches to better understand the role of the schools of the engagement of Latino immigrant parents. I conceptualized schools as complex and highly bureaucratized systems that reproduce inequalities. Studying the structure of schools helps to uncover the obstacles that parents face when attempting to become engaged in their children's schools and gives us insights in the initiatives and approaches that can be effective in involving parents. Combining these approaches allows me to accomplish four objectives. First, it allows me to develop a more complex explanation of the intricacies of parental engagement, particularly in the new immigrant destination context. Second, these approaches explain the way in which the Branson Springs School District (BSSD) encourage or constrain Latino parental engagement and the way in which they are adapting to the exponential growth of Latino families. This helps me to better access policies that can be implemented to engage Latino parents in a more meaningful way and allows me to have a thorough explanation of the context that Latino parents face in their

interaction with school in a new immigrant destination. Third, combining approaches lets me explain more thoroughly the interaction and struggles that Latino parents have with the schools. This information strengthens my case study of the BPAC because it puts into context the perception that school officials have about them and the methods that they are using to relate to them. This gives me a clearer picture of the struggles that Latino parents encounter in schools and helps me answer the questions of my research (see Chapter 2). Fourth and finally, looking at the role and the structure of the schools allows me to understand the variables and institutional changes that need to be in place to better engaged Latino parents, to acknowledge their voice and worldview, and to build a stronger parent-school partnership. This is a key component to create better strategies to increase the parental engagement of Latino parents. Identifying these variables can create a successful formula that can be used to create relevant policy that will be more inclusive of Latino parents in schools.

B. Latinos as a Threat to the Nation

In the City of Branson Springs, there are nativistic and racist sentiments based on the idea of Latinos as a threat to the nation that longtime residents of the area have about Latinos that block their engagement in the community. These sentiments are rooted on ideas based on a Latino threat narrative. This narrative as explained by Chavez (2008) is the idea that Latinos are taking over (*reconquista*) the United States culturally and their inability to assimilate. According to Rosas (2012), in the United States there are many groups that follow this narrative and persecute and terrorize undocumented immigrants along the border. He explains: "one of the leaders, Gary Spenser, claims that Mexican immigrants dilute American culture, an instantiation at the new frontier of ideas and that Samuel Huntington espoused after September 11" (Rosas 2012:91). According to Huntington,

> the persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves -- from Los Angeles to Miami -- and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge at its perils (2004:30).

The history of discrimination and racialization of Latino immigrants in the United States fuel school's staff perceptions of Latino immigrants as not belonging to the nation-state and by default not belonging to schools (see Rosas 2012, Chavez 2008). In the case of the City of Branson Springs, the rapid demographic shift created a "typical" phenomenon in the context of new immigrant destinations; erroneous perceptions of Latinos as a threat. In the beginning, Latinos encountered resistance, racism, and discrimination. They were considered a threat, and seen as group of people that could not assimilate and as a permanent other. This was evident in my interactions with longtime residents, some teachers and some administrators who perceived Latinos as "taking over" the town and changing the framework of the city and the culture; changing the traditions, business and language. According to some of the administrators, in some of the meetings with white residents of the City of Branson Springs, they complained about the undocumented status of Latinos, their unwillingness to learn English, and the services that the school district is creating for Latino using the tax dollars of U.S. citizens. Also, in the 2010 community forum, some of the residents complained about our presentation because we translated everything to Spanish and they believed that people need to learn English if they live in the United States. One of the mayors was unwilling to communicate with Latino immigrants accusing them of not wanting to learn English or assimilate as did other immigrant groups before them. These instances were not exceptions. Many times in meetings, I could feel the tension of

white residents against Latinos because the white residents felt that Latinos do not belong to the City of Branson Springs.

The ideas of the Latino threat are not only based on race and culture, but also on ideas of who belong in the nation-state and who have the right to have rights. These are premises that are based on the birthright citizenship and the preservation of the nation state from the U.S. Constitution. According to Stevens (2010), birthright citizenship and nation-state identity are some of the root causes of the immigration dilemma. She believes that if we have states without nations, these problems will disappear. Without birthright citizenship claims about land ownership, old residents of the City of Branson Springs could not claim the territory as theirs and could not argue that Latinos are invading their space. In a community forum and CAS interviews with long-time residents of the City of Branson Springs, it was demonstrated that they felt that the city (their territory) was being invaded by Latinos.

In addition to considering Latinos a threat, some residents and some teachers accept an array of stereotypes about Latinos that contributes to the idea of not belonging. Many ideas are based on historic stereotypes portrait by the media that see Latinos are uneducated, unintelligent, and/or criminals (Chavez 2008, Rodríguez 1997, Ramírez Berg 1997). For example, in an interview with Rachel (a school-board member) we discuss these stereotypes:

Rachel: What is it we need to teach them? I mean, if I look back, we have people that have emigrated here from all countries all over the world. My grandparents came from Poland. They came here. They didn't speak English. Their children did. My parents went on to school and then their kids went on to school and eventually, they evolve into successful citizens. Why is that not happening with the Hispanic community?

Interviewer: Why do you think?

Rachel: I think it's because people don't believe they can. It's because people's perception of the Hispanic community.

Interviewer: You think it's perception. You think maybe it is racism or something?

Rachel: Yeah, it's people's perception of the Hispanic community. They think the Hispanics are no good, bad, uneducated, criminals, whatever. People just have the wrong perception of the Hispanic community. Whereas if it's the Germans and the Polish and the Italians, they're all Eastern European and while they might all have different cultures and different languages, they weren't looked down upon. That's a big difference that I see between the Hispanic population and the African-American population. There's no language barrier with the African-American population but when I look at Hispanic parents, they wanna help their kids. They just don't know how. When I'm working with African-American kids and you've gotta understand that I work with the at-risk, the higher risk students their parents say, "I don't know what to do with them. Here, fix them." They don't have that passion to help their kids be better. They say, "You're just rotten, kid. Here, fix my kid." Whereas the Hispanic community, it is. "I don't know. I want to. I don't know how to help them." That's the difference that I see in those two cultures. I just don't know, so when you have that conversation, tell me what to do and we'll figure out how to do it here. We'll figure out how to do it in the schools and we will focus some on that. I had the conversation with Ramona (executive director of Oasis for Immigrants)…We had that conversation about how do we do that? How do we change that perception? What do we do? We just can't come to a conclusion. How do we raise the self-esteem of these kids? How do we make them believe that they can do it? I mean there are things. What have we tried? We've tried bringing in successful people that are Hispanic or successful people that are African-American and talk to these kids and show them how they can be. We talked about educated Hispanics. How many Hispanics do we have right now that really are educated, that can take some of these positions? If we could hire a million people like Ramona that have that, or like, Julio (me) here, that have the education, that can help those families and help them to help their kids. I can't help them to help their kids. I can't speak Spanish so I really can't help them but I can certainly help put programs in place if I know what they want. I can help to put those programs in place. I wish I could speak Spanish. I'm too old to learn another language. Not learning it now. I don't know. I wish I knew what the solution was to it, but I appreciate that people like you are really working hard to find it and taking the time.

Rachel's explanation of the wrong perception about Latinos as not good, bad, uneducated, and criminals is very complex. On the one hand, she describes the racialization of Latinos as different from white Europeans. This is what Tuan (1998) describes in her research about Asian Americans in the U.S. as seen as forever foreigners no matter how distant they are from the immigrant generation. Rachel describes that the same is happening with Latinos in Branson Springs. On the other hand, she criticizes African Americans and accuses them as not caring as much as Latinos do about their children. She recognizes the groups are racialized in relation to each other and the existence of a racial hierarchy in which she positions Latinos in the middle,

whites on top and Blacks on the bottom (see Bonilla-Silva 2004, 2010; Kim 1999). Of course, she sees Latinos as having the potential to improve if the right structures are in place and the perception of the white majority change. However, she stills think that they need help because they cannot do it by themselves. In the case of African Americans, she blames the structure of the family as their major problem. She uses this explanation from a colorblind ideology and never mentioned race or the color of the skin as reason why these groups cannot advance in the United States educational system. This is a typical phenomenon for whites who use a colorblind explanation to uncover their uneasiness in talking about race (Bonilla-Silva 2010).

The perception of Latinos as a threat was present during community meetings and in a forum in which not only community members, but also mayors and other politicians expressed their feeling that Latinos were taking over their city. This perception contributes to the way in which schools are structured in the United States and Branson Springs is no exception in which colorblind policies are practiced. This hinders the full engagement of Latino parents in schools. For example, even when the majority of the student population at the district is Latino, many of their parents cannot participate in the democratic process that happens at the schools because of their legal status. For instance, when undocumented parents try to volunteer at the school, principals required them to do a background check because they are going to be working with children in the classrooms. Many undocumented parents refused to go through the background check and thus were not allowed to volunteer. This is part of the policing and control that schools use to regulate access to their premises. This is a reflection of the biopower (Foucault 1975, 1976) of the State over bodies that directly affect the opportunities of undocumented parents to get more involved. Again, this contradicts the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation claims that all parents have equal partnership and equal rights because practices and

laws at the state and local level create mechanisms of exclusion that hinder undocumented parents' attempts to obtain that equal partnership. Also, volunteers have to fill out a form than among other things asks them for their race and for their legal status, a discriminatory, and in the case of the status question, illegal request[19].

In the case of Chicago, even when the school board members are appointed by the mayor, schools still have a Local School Council (LSC) that has decision making power within the school. To be a member of this council, parents do not need to be U.S. citizens or registered voters in Chicago. In the case of the Illinois suburbs, schools do not have LSCs. Most of the important decisions are made by the school board that does not necessarily need to have any representation from immigrant, Latinos or undocumented parents. In the case of the City of Branson Springs, to be board member one needs to be a resident of the City for at least one year, to be an active register voter. In other words, you need to be an active citizen (Bosniak 2006)[20]. According to Flores,

> Undocumented should have the right to vote, but rather whether all parents, citizens or not, should have the right to have a determination in the governing bodies of their local schools. Moreover, undocumented workers pay taxes without representation. Their taxes contribute to school construction, and do ADA (average daily attendance) money earned by the schools from their children's attendance. Should they as parents not then have the right to vote? In fighting to extend voting rights, Latinos extended both parents' rights and the rights of the "undocumented" voting rights debates were thus reframed not in terms of formal membership, but actual contributions. Involving the undocumented in local schools, Latinos deposed the limited concept of citizenship as a restrictive category and replaced it with the much more inclusive notion of "citizens" as public actors and as "subjects" of public action. Winning the right to vote in local community school board elections opens the door for great participation in society. Parents who take interest in their school matters are more likely to participate in other local elections and civic issues (1997:260)

[19] The BPAC parents gave this form in an audit meeting to personnel from the Illinois State Board of Education to let them decide the legality of this question.
[20] According to Bosniak (2006), to be an active citizen you need to have "active" participation in society. Voting is one of the measures that many cities in the U.S. use to measure active citizenship.

Undocumented parents should have the full rights within the schools, including voting in elections and being able to run for the school board. In the long run, their children are the ones keeping the structure of the public schools running.

The engagement of Latino parents in the Branson Springs School District is affected by threat perceptions along with school and community stereotypes against their potential and the school bureaucratic structure that protects white privilege. In certain ways, Latino parents are blocked from their engagement attempts before they even try. Their engagement is affected by a racialization process and by an unwelcoming environment that discourage them to fully participate in schools (Moreno and Valencia 2002, Olivos et al. 2011, Hong 2011, Terriquez 2011, 2012, Lopez et al. 2003, Ramirez 2003). The existing literature falls short in the context of a new immigrant destination. My research exposes other factors that are unique to the context of schools in new immigrant destinations.

C. A Work in Progress: Schools Adapting to Latino Immigrant Parents

The Branson Springs School District has been slow to adapt to the unique situation of Latino immigrant parents. Latino parents started moving into the area in the 1980s. According to Cristina, a long-time resident of the area, a couple of Puerto Ricans were the only Latinos in the area in the 1980s. She explains: "*cuando nosotros nos mudamos ahí, los vecinos se asombraron. Una señora hasta fue a vernos, a ver como éramos nosotros porque creían que eramos mexicanos, porque yo creo que de escuchar puertorriqueños no sabían*" (When we moved here the neighbors were surprised. A woman went to see us, to see how we were because they thought that we were Mexicans, because I think that when they heard Puerto Ricans they did not know). For Cristina, this was a new experience because she grew up in the Humboldt

Park area in Chicago where a Puerto Rican community was already established. In Branson Springs, Puerto Ricans and many other Latinos were an unknown entity. She came to the area following her sister and has lived in Branson Springs since 1983. She has two daughters who went through the school system and she was the only Hispanic that was part of the PTO, but was not even acknowledged when she was volunteering in the schools. She felt ignored and isolated in schools. Because of this situation and the bad reputation of the school district, she moved her daughters to a private Catholic school to give them access to a better education[21].

The rapid increase of Latinos during the 1990s created a situation in where the schools and schools staff were not prepared culturally, linguistically, or structurally to adapt to Latino families. At the beginning, school staff were in denial of the change and had the perception that Latinos were transient residents. Once their assumptions were challenged, they made little effort to understand the students' cultural background. An interview with a school administrator demonstrates this:

Interviewer: What about the challenges?

Kenny: Uh, the staff (chuckles)

Interviewer: (laughs)

Kenny: Um, because they don't understand our kids.

Interviewer: Okay. In what ways?

Kenny: Um, this school in the last nine years has really changed… the demographics really shifted. It used to be fifty seven percent white about nine years ago and now we're finding we're over sixty percent Hispanic.

Kenny: Well, what I have found, and I think what many have found, is that the teachers did pretty good teaching the white kids but now as the demographics changed, they haven't done anything to increase their awareness of how do we educate all kids. Um, so I think from that perspective, that's a challenge. They don't understand some of the different cultures that exist in our school.

[21] Cristina like Ernesto (Chapter 4) was sacrificing her limited income to give access to her daughters for a better education.

Interviewer: Okay, and that's creating problems academically or…

Kenny: I think academically. There is a disconnect academically where, you know, teachers may talk about a concept some kids may not have the background knowledge to understand that concept but they'll just continue on. So we're trying to change the way we approach our learning aspect for kids.

Interviewer: In what ways are you trying to change?

Kenny: Um, we're trying to align all course teams so that the curriculum's the same. Give common assessments, collect data so that we can be better prepared to ask ourselves is this poor teaching or not as good teaching or is the kids just don't get it and then how do we go back and reteach concepts to kids so they do understand it; taking the shift off of the teaching environment and making it more of a learning environment.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that has to do, then, in some way with cultural competency, you know, like how they don't understand the different culture of the Hispanics for example?

Kenny: Yeah. We've tried to do some things. And I think they're getting a little better. But I still think we need to do more so they can understand our kids. I mean, even if it's something as small as celebrating, um, something in their culture that's very significant to them. We as in white American people, we probably don't even understand some of their cultural things that they do, whether it's Cinco de Mayo or just anything.

Interviewer: Are you trying to integrate that more to the school?

Kenny: Yes, we're trying to integrate it into the school.

Kenny's concerns about the ineptitude of white teachers to teach Hispanic students was shared by other principals in interviews and reveals a bigger structural problem that affects the ability of schools to hire more Latino teachers and to adequately train white teachers in cultural competency or related ideas to deal with Latinos and their funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992, Gonzalez et al. 2005). This narrative was repeated in other interviews with administrators and in meetings and conversations with Latino parents. When I asked administrators if they were conducting any cultural competency training to learn more about the Hispanic culture, they explained that is getting better, but I do not think is good enough. In a conversation with an administrator, we discussed training;

Interviewer: Can you have, training about learning more about the Latino culture?

Sean: Yes. And once a year, I know it's not the most frequent time, but once a year we do a professional development day where we do all kinds of trainings. We have staff sign up for three to five of them, and we do it from staff within the building and people from outside. So every year we've done one on gangs. We usually do it on something to do with culture, or how, some strategies for the classroom, things like that and a myriad of other things. But yeah we do a lot of professional development. Everything's aligned. We have four year plan in our school working towards our curriculum and everything's encompassed around that.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. What's the response of the staff?

Sean: It's getting better.

Interviewer: It's getting better?

Sean: It's getting better. They used to do professional development as I understood it prior to me coming here was one-shot deals, meaning they'd bring somebody in for a day and that person would leave and they wouldn't talk about it ever again.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Sean: We use our own experts in the building now for our professional development. Uh, that way it's job embedded. It's something we do on a daily basis and it's all connected to our work.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Sean: And we have a clear schedule during the day where one period a day everybody is working with their course team and they're working on their curriculum and their power standards towards their curriculum.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Sean: So it's all focused on those topics.

Sean's answers, together with Kenny's, summarize the perceptions and efforts of white school district administrators. They believed adding a couple of "cultural" training days together with talking about and celebrating Cinco de Mayo was going to make a difference towards understanding the culture and knowledge of Latino families or will create a more culturally relevant curriculum for Latinos. Sean's idea of getting better was far from the reality of any major attempt to deal with the situation and change the structure of inequality. He demonstrated

a superficial understanding of cultural competency in action and an unwillingness to put forth much effort to create substantive change. According to Gorski (2009), most teachers in the United States do not get train to deal with multicultural students or to teach multiculturalism. Also, even if more cultural competency trainings are conducted, these will not be enough to change the structure of discrimination that affects Latino immigrants in schools.

The teacher-student cultural and racial incongruity was one problem that this school district was dealing with in their interaction with Latinos. Other factors such as a teacher strike, major economic problems in the district, and high turnover of administrators created chaos while simultaneously the Latino student population was increasing. According to many of the school personnel I interviewed, many bridges were burned during this painful structural transition and there are many scars that continue to the present day. Also, the school district focused mainly on fixing their finances and not on teacher curriculum development. Although some programs were created, most failed because there was no follow-up or because they did not have enough staff to maintain them. An example of these programs was the Latino Club conducted by the bilingual teachers in one of the schools. According to Leo one of the bilingual teachers:

We used to try to do everything, a Latino club, we had an international club and it was all basically bilingual because, they, the one teacher, the one person who's doing it had to leave because of problems in the family. She was not able to do it for a year. She took a year off so they closed it down and then they had all this money. The kids actually would be telling you. They had all this money the kids had made selling candy bars and stuff. This is right when I came in where the new administration changes stuff. They came in. They shut that down and they took all that money and bought some printing stuff for the school. That was the kids' money. We went in to try to open it up. Sorry, that club doesn't exist anymore because we're the bilingual ESL teachers, bilingual social workers and two to five bilingual teachers to try to – they didn't let us open the club back up. They said we didn't have to go to the foreign learning and they're not going to accept because there are no funds for it or anything else like that. What happened to those funds?

Interviewer: That was the new administration or old administration?

Leo: That would've been, that was during the transition administration where we had the good – first the administrator was pretty open to let us to whatever we wanted and the second then we had an intern and then we had one after the intern was the person who I was always fighting with, nothing with the word Latino like no Latino dances, nothing, can't use that word, not in the posters not in the – which I thought was a little bit crazy. During that administration, so yeah, that was right – so we couldn't open that club up but when a foreign language teacher asked to open it up, they were like oh, yeah, let's do this.

Leo's experience is similar to the experiences of many frustrated school staff in the Branson Springs school district who feel powerless in the erratic transition where programs that are working are cut without reason or because one principal's own bias against Latinos. Also, there is a history of changes in administration that affect follow-up strategies. In my four years in the Branson Springs School District, I witnessed schools that had at least one new principal every year. This not only affected the continuity of programs and practices, but also affected the ability of administrators to build significant relationships with teachers, staff, students and families. These relationships are one of the building blocks of parental engagement.

D. A Communication Problem

In 2010, when I started conducting research in the Branson Springs School District, I witnessed that the relationship between school staff and Latino parents was almost non-existent. These two groups were living in two different worlds and they were not relating or communicating to each other. There was a significant disconnection and communication gap between schools and Latino parents. While Latino parents felt ignored, disrespected, lost, and confused in their interaction with schools, the school staff did not have too much knowledge about the life and involvement of Latino parents. Many of the staff were not aware of the

existence of the BPAC, of the bilingual coordinator or parent coordinator. Only two principals were involved in some way with the BPAC and one of them left for a different district after a few years and the other one was moved to a middle school during a restructuring process and lost some of the contact with the BPAC.

The communication problem between Latino parents and school's staff is in part the product of the district's slow response to the demographic changes. Despite being predominately Latino since 2002, the school district does not have enough Spanish-speaking personnel who can communicate with the Latino immigrant parents or have an understanding of immigrant life. Even when the Latino student population increased to 71% in 2013, the Latino school staff population decreased from 4.9% in 1999 to 1.0% in 2011. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, because of funding reasons and the racialization of their jobs, Latino staff are more likely to lose their jobs at a higher rate than the rest of the district's employees. This racial, ethnic, class and cultural mismatch between Latino parents and school officials created a situation of mistrust between these groups. This distrust, fueled by the rapid shift in demographics that turned the once majority white district to a predominantly Latino district in less than a decade, created many cultural misunderstanding and communication problems that affected the approach that school staff used to try to involve Latino parents. Below, Rachel expresses the challenges that they face in their interaction with Latino parents.

Interviewer: How's the school board concerned about the changes in the community with more Latinos?

Rachel: You know, I think they struggle. I think our District struggles just as much, if not more, with the barriers—the language barriers, the cultural barriers out in the community. It's very difficult after so many years to get the people to trust us and to feel comfortable coming into the school. Who do you talk to? How do you learn? The superintendent has gone out into the community but we still struggle with it. We still struggle with it.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Rachel: Because they don't trust the school. They feel as if they're not good enough because they didn't go to school. They don't know what to do to help their kids. I find myself working here…and we work with our family on our family nights, I find that the Hispanic families wanna help their kids. They don't know how. I think we as … as a School District, need to learn how to teach them to help their children because they're more than willing to do that. They're willing to do anything they can to help their kids but we need to figure out how we can teach them to teach their kids.

Rachel recognizes that the school district is struggling and facing many cultural barriers that influence their approach and the trust in their interaction with Latinos. Interestingly, she believes that one of the factors that affects the trust of the parents has to do with their lack of cultural capital. Also, she thinks that Latinos have a self-esteem problem and that they need help. She feels that the district's role is to teach these parents how to help their kids and how to help themselves. However, she is only seeing the situation at the surface. Even when she mentions the structure of the schools as part of the problem in building trust with Latinos, she still puts more weight in the "lacks" of Latinos as her explanation. She uses a cultural-deficit discourse without acknowledging the community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006) that Latino parents bring with them. This cultural deficit approach was also present in many of the interviews with principals, teachers, and school staff who believe in the culture of poverty idea. For example, in an interview with a bilingual teacher, he reproduces the culture of poverty thesis when referring to Latino students and their families.

Leo: Yeah. When I came in, the principal was sort of, she was sort of proud of the fact she spoke a little Spanish and so she was kind of, she seems to care about the students to a certain extent. She would do things like she'd bought us some computers and gave us a little computer room which got taken over right away by the other teachers so we never got to use it. They were supportive of things like doing Latino activities like we would do Latino dances. We did, first year I came in, I organized a, with a couple of other people, we organized, it was sort of my idea. These kids, they don't know anything. They've never talked to a nurse before. They've never talked to any kind of professional. They never talked to anybody but their

parents and uncles and they're all landscapers and factory workers or whatever, right? I sort of say no wonder they're not very motivated for education, right? Because motivation has always been an issue with these kids. They're not coming from educated families and they don't have a vision for themselves beyond anything different than what the parents do, right?
They're still somewhat that where they start to joke with me. They said "Mr. Leo, why are you trying to teach us this stuff; you know we're just going to be out there doing landscaping, right?"

Interviewer: You did not know they had all those potentials.

Leo: They have very low expectations of themselves and then of course there's always that, the culture of poverty, where you see lots of that, but I've seen less of that lately. But early on, anyone who tried to rise above or move or who's academically motivated and had motivation, it's really, really hard. There's a lot of downward pressure socially. I'm sure you've studied some of that kind of thing where this downward pressure on kids, if you break out, you're really looked down. You're laughed at. You were made fun of. It's not even laughed at or making fun of. You're actually, you're just not accepted whereas that seems to be, more and more students seem like it's okay to want to do well. It's okay to want to do better at school. It's okay to want to try to do something other than be a landscaper or a factory worker. It's okay. There's a little more of that.

These perceptions were present in many interviews with school staff that perceive Latino parents and their children as being trapped in a cycle of poverty that is deeply cultural. Also, this teacher refers to Latino students as not having enough ambition and not succeeding on purpose for the fear of acting white (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). He was obviously referring to the ideas embedded in oppositional theory and the culture of poverty thesis (see Fordham and Ogbu 1986 and Lewis 1959). Even when these ideas had been challenged (see Flores-Gonzalez 2002), many teachers and administrators in Branson Springs still embrace these perceptions about Latino children and their families. In another example, Kenny, a school administrator explains:

I was gonna put it in the category of culture. I think it's the culture of the school and the way the kids probably, their experiences where they've come from. What their background is and what they've been used to as a community here in Branson Springs. On the other hand, I can't necessarily say that's the only reason why. I suspect part of the reason. Maybe it's high poverty. I don't know if that's the only reason. It's part of the reason.

Even when some administrators do not agree with the culture of poverty idea, they have to fight the perception that other school staff members and community members have about Latinos. For example, according to Jason:

I think that there's still sometimes a perception among certain groups of people, whether it's parents, whether it's teachers, that not every child can learn to the same level. I think until we get rid of that, then they're right. The kids won't achieve at a certain level. For example, in a bilingual classroom, a whole group of kids in a bilingual classroom that are Spanish speakers, they're learning English. Sometimes there is a perception among certain people that they can't achieve to the same degree that a regular English-speaking classroom can. I disagree with that. I think that they can achieve to the same degree. I have parents, for example, that move into the community and they want to come and tour the school. They wanna hear about how our, for lack of a better term, white kids are mixed with Spanish speaking kids because they're concerned that they're kid's education is going to be held back because we have Spanish speakers in the building. I struggle with that because for me, all kids can achieve to very high degrees. I've seen it happen. I know it happens. But until the adults who are educating these kids stop thinking like that, it's not gonna happen, because it's us that have to make it happen. So that's a challenge.

The fight against the perception of Latinos as culturally deficient was even harder to wage when many teachers also believe the culture of poverty thesis. Rachel explains the perceptions of teachers against Latino students.

Rachel: We have so many teachers that just don't believe our kids can learn.

Interviewer: No?

Rachel: Because they're low income, first generation, they can't learn.

Interviewer: Especially the Latinos?

Rachel: "Oh, we can't expect our kids to do that."

Interviewer: Especially with the Latino kids, when do you see it?

Rachel: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. "Our kids can't learn." "We can't expect that of our kids." Why can't you expect it?

I heard Rachel's story over and over again in interviews with school officials and parents. This was confirmed by two Latino custodians who explain that most of the school teachers "*se creen muy, muy y nos tratan muy mal como que son mejores que nosotros y nos hacen el trabajo más difícil"*. (The teachers think that they are better and they treat us very badly and make our job more difficult). Here they explain how they're aware that the staff's behavior is linked to the intersection of class and race. Teachers, the majority of whom are white and educated, see Latino working class families as below them.

The cultural deficit ideas were present in many of the interviews with schools officials that viewed Latino immigrant parents as uninvolved and uncaring, and most of the time approached them through a cultural deficit lens. This created a scenario in which the distrust between Latino parents and the school district personnel was evident and stunted collaboration efforts. Also, when school staff refers to having a communication problem with Latino parents, many other factors came into play. The idea of a communication problem between Latino families and school staff is a simplistic one, because it ignores the structural inadequacies of the school district and their own biases against Latinos. Part of the problem is based not having enough staff that speaks Spanish and failure to understand or acknowledge the Latino culture and communication styles. Basically, school staff struggle to understand the communication and engagement styles of Latino parents. Instead of finding ways to fix this problem, they prefer to blame the culture of the parents as the source of the problems, instead of looking at their own biases and at structural changes that can be implemented to improve their relationship with each other.

In the year 2012, the situation had improved a little when a bilingual staff was hired in the school's district main offices that can communicate with the Latino parents. Also, two bilingual administrators were hired. Juan, one of these administrators, explains:

> You know I think, um, I think a lot of the family is a… you know I think they're… they're excited to have someone who's a Hispanic and you know someone who speaks Spanish in this kind of leadership role. Um, to my knowledge, I'm the only administrator here at the high school that is bilingual. I'm the only administrator in the high school that is Hispanic.

Juan communicates a major problem that the school district is dealing with their slow response to hired more Latino or bilingual staff. What's worse, he has a huge caseload because he is one of the only administrators who speaks Spanish. This is evidence that more bilingual staff are needed to understand the culture and struggles of Latino parents.

E. The "Not Enough Latino Qualified Candidates" Dilemma

One of the major problems in the school district is the mismatch between Latino students and Latino staff. When I asked school administrators and board members to find solutions for this problem during my interviews and interactions, they mention that one of the main problems of keeping and hiring Latinos in the schools district is that they do not have enough Latino qualified candidates. Also, in a community forum with the school board, they mention the racial disparity about students and staff, and I complained about it publicly by asking a question on the microphone. At the end of the meeting, three board members approached me to explain that is not that they are discriminating against Latinos, that the real problem is that there are not enough Latino qualified candidates. At first, this sounded like an easy excuse not to hire more Latinos or a justification of the evident structural discrimination against Latinos in the school district. However, the situation is more complex. The majority of the Latino migrants who moved to

Branson Springs have low levels of education and work mostly in low wage, manual and service oriented jobs like construction, landscaping, and domestic work, etc. Also, most of the educated Latinos who work in the City of Branson Springs lived in neighboring suburbs. For example, every time that there is an open position in the school board, I tried with the BPAC to recruit a Latino candidate to run for the board but we could not find anyone who wanted to run, who meet all the requirements, or who lived in the area. Definitely, the pool of available candidates is not big enough and few educated Latinos are motivated to start their careers in a new destination, especially when this school district cannot compete with the salaries of other school districts in the area. According to Flores-Gonzalez et al. (2015), Illinois is one of the states that invest the least in education and has one of the greatest funding inequities of the United States. For this reason, local school district depends more on local wealth, creating a situation in where rich school districts has more money to fund their school than poor school districts; this together with local school policies and school funding inequity affect the instructional spending per pupil, teachers' salaries, and opportunities for Latino immigrants in new immigration destinations (Flores-Gonzalez et al. 2015). According to Rick, a school administrator, the situation is more complex. He explains this in the following conversation:

Interviewer: Do you see Latinos participating in civic life in your community? If yes: How? Since when? What do they do? Are they decision makers? If no: What prevents Latinos from participating more actively in local affairs?

Ben: No, not very much. I do not know what prevents them from participating. We had an opening in the school board, we asked the principals to ask parents if they would be interested, we called all of our parents. We only had of 17 people, only one was Latino, yet you have a school district where 70% are Latinos. We should have a school board that reflects that. We have one board member who is Latino. He was born in the U.S. and his parents are from Honduras. It is very frustrating. The one lady who applied, I thought was a good candidate, but the board did not go for her; there is a disconnect there, she was not selected. I think it will be better because she is the president of the PTO, the more people who can gravitate there, the better. When I interviewed for the superintendent, we had a parent committee, and one of the parents was a

high-school parent from Mexico; he provided great feedback to the process, and I asked if he was interested in being on the school board, and he said no, but you have to keep working on it.

Ben explains that even when a good candidate applied for the school board seat this person was not selected. When I spoke with the sole Latino board member about why the school board does not hire more Latino candidates in administrative positions, he complained about the lack of qualified candidates, and explained that this is used as excuse. He said that he was the only one want trying to bring more Latinos to the hiring pool. Also, he definitely has felt the discrimination against Latinos:

David*: Bueno, le digo que tal vez este es un buen ejemplo, yo fui elegido en 2009 y en ese mismo año empezamos a buscar un superintendente nuevo porque Dr. Jenkins (pseudonym) que estuvo tres años ya se iba a retirar, así que mi pensamiento era que ya era tiempo con una población de estudiantes que era 60% latino y que era tiempo de tener a alguien aunque sea bilingüe y que pudieran entender a la comunidad y tal vez podría motivar a los padres. Cuando uno mira a alguien que se mira como uno, uno se siente animado y dice que bueno que hay alguien que es un poco trigueñito y habla español como yo, ¿verdad? Quiere decir que yo pude aspirar a eso y para empezar dije ya tenemos esa oportunidad, no digo alguien Latino porque tal vez eso es como mandatorio decir, tiene que ser alguien latino o latina. Pero alguien que sea bilingüe aunque sea. Entonces mi primera meta era esa, bueno fui el único que vote contra el superintendente que tenemos porque no es latino y no es bilingüe. Los otros dijeron, todo eso de bilingüe tienen que ser que aún punto todos aprendemos inglés y todos vamos a entendernos, vamos a llegar a ese punto, tiene que ser alguien que sea calificado para ser superintendente. Bueno, ¿y qué quiere decir eso? No vamos a escoger a alguien que no tenga un doctorado así que ese comentario es algo que siempre usamos para decir, en verdad no estamos interesados en nadie que es una minoría, afroamericano o latina. O sea, siempre he tenido que combatir con esa concepción de la junta de que es alguien Latino que va a hacer menos que otros candidatos. Así que como te digo, fui el único que vote contra el superintendente que tenemos ahorita. No porque no era calificado, es porque no era bilingüe. Así que él empezó la conversación que tenemos que empezar a hablar el idioma de los padres, sea el material que va a la casa, sea que en la reunión tenemos que tener un traductor para que ellos se sientan que son parte de la familia del distrito escolar, no que venimos a la reunión, no es que no queremos entender inglés, es que no hemos llegado a ese punto todavía y van a una oficina en el distrito y no hay nadie que hable español, tienen que ir a buscar a un traductor en vez de tener empleados que hablen el idioma. Así que tenemos que mirar a la comunidad y tratar de tener gente que se mira como la comunidad, que hable el idioma y eso es otra lucha que todavía estamos. Siempre el enfoque tiene que ser alguien que hable el idioma y tenemos a tres candidatos y aunque sea uno de sus candidatos tiene que ser bilingüe y antes no. Así que siempre estamos peleando en como*

tenemos empleados más balanceados que se miren más como la comunidad para servir a la comunidad.

David: Okay, I told you that this is a good example, I was elected in 2009 and in that same year they started to look for a new superintendent because Dr. Jenkins (pseudonym) was here three years and he was going to retire. My thinking was that it was time to have someone that is bilingual and that can understand the Latino community and that can motivate the parents in a place that is 60% Latino. When you look at someone that look likes you, you feel excited and you say that someone that is a little trigueñito (brown) and speaks Spanish like me, right? That means that I can aspire to that and to begin I said that we have that opportunity. I do not say that we have to hire someone that is Latino because that it is not mandatory that it has to be someone Latino. But at least it has to be someone that is bilingual. Then my first goal was that, I was the only one that voted against the superintendent that we have that is not Latino or bilingual. The other board member said that being bilingual is a point, but eventually we all learn English and we all are going to understand each other, we are going to get this point, it has to be someone that is qualified to be superintendent. Ok, and who is going to say that? We are not going to select someone that does not have a Ph.D. My commentary is something that we always use to say seriously that we are not interested in anybody that it is a minority, African American or Latino. Is that we always have to fight that conception of the board that it is someone Latino it is going to do less that other candidates. I was the only one that voted against the current superintendent, not because he was not qualified, it was because, he was not bilingual. He started the conversation that we have to begin to talk the language of the parents, meaning the material that we send home, meaning that we need a translator in the meetings that we have. In this way, they can feel that they are part of the family of the school district. Just because we cannot go to the meeting does not mean that we do not want to understand English; it is because we have not gotten to that point yet and they will go to the office in the district and there is no one that speaks Spanish. They have to go to look for a translator instead of having employees that speak Spanish. We have to look at the community and try to have people that look like the community, that speak the language and that is another fight that we still have. Always the focus has to be someone that speaks the language and we have three candidates and one of them has to be bilingual and before, that was not the case. In this way, we are always fighting to have employees more balance that look more like the community to serve the community.

David unmasks the major problems behind the disconnection between Latino parents and staff. He also explains the structural problems with the hiring practices in the school district. At the end of the day, the school board hired an African American superintendent who did not speak Spanish. Also, recently they replaced the ESL coordinator who was Latina and spoke Spanish with a non-Spanish-speaking white woman.

Latino parents were aware of the racial dynamics of the school district because it had a direct impact on their engagement and their children's education. They were the ones who

struggled to understand non-Latinos and the ones who have to fight to keep Latino staff. Latino parents complained multiple times of how more Latino staff, teachers, and administrators were needed. Also, they complained that Latinos (especially Latinas) were the first ones to get laid off every year when the budget is cut or when the curriculum gets restructured. I suspect that Latina professionals suffer the most in terms of the inadequacies of the school district and the racialized jobs at schools (Brinson and Smith 2014). They are suffering what Hill-Collins (2000) describe as the matrix of domination, where women are oppressed within the intersectionality of their multiple social classifications. Also, because Latinos are working in racialized jobs, they are more vulnerable than the rest of the employees. According to Collins (1997), racialized jobs not only hinder the upward mobility of minority workers, but also put them in a very fragile position where their jobs could be eliminated at any given moment. The perceptions of Latino parents and the Latino school staff that I talked to is that Latinos in general are paying for the failure of the school systems in BSSD. The BPAC believes Latinos are under attack and nobody is going to help them but themselves. I do not have enough evidence to prove that discrimination is happening, but for the parents of the BPAC, this was a real threat that affected their relationship with school staff and their trust and engagement. Even if there were no real discriminatory practices happening, the perception of Latino staff is that they are under attack and that they have to be careful because they could be next on the chopping block. Also, parents from the Latino parents group are very aware of this situation, asking questions, and pushing the district to do something about it. This was a conversation that we had in many of the BPAC meetings.

The situation of workplace discrimination against Latinos or lack of Latinos "qualified" candidates is hard to measure. The BSSD did not have a Human Resources (HR) Department until 2012 and their hiring practices are an enigma. This makes it even more difficult to track the

hiring processes, to know the exact number of Latinos who were applying and the ones who were not hired, or to track if any discriminatory practices were happening. Also, not having an HR department limited the outreach and exposure of the employment opportunities; before the HR department was formed, the open positions were only posted on an internal teacher website and now they are available in major job-search engines such as Career Builder or Indeed. In addition to this, the bureaucracy of the school district makes it impossible to understand all the hiring and layoff practices that are happening with their restructuring of the curriculum and the pressure from the state and federal government to improve test scores.

While hard data on this issue were unavailable, conversations I had with white school staff revealed that Latinos were not the only group sensitive to workplace discrimination. When I asked about workplace discrimination in interviews and conversations with white school staff, they felt uncomfortable or gave me vague answers. Below I show some examples of these conversations.

Interviewer: Are trying to diversify your staff a little bit?

Sean: Absolutely. Absolutely that's in the classroom and the administration.

Interviewer: Is that something that is easy or it's becoming a challenge?

Sean: Well you know we've had great success over the past two years with our hiring, had some wonderful candidates, and, um, people that have stepped in and done great jobs and, um, I think with that said, we're increasing that. It's small. Our numbers have been very small. I think when I first came here, there was maybe two or three people that had any different culture other than being Caucasian. Or you know, white. And now we have probably eight to twelve. So it's getting better but it's not where it should be, not when you have sixty percent of your staff, or your students one race and you don't have the staff that mirrors that. You're got to continue to try and build that.

This administrator showcases the uncomfortable situation of talking about race for white personnel in the BSSD. He expresses the difficulty of hiring nonwhite staff, but he is not able to

mention the diversity of this new staff that he is hiring. In another interview, another administrator mentions:

Ben: Uh, no but we have increased, um, our bilingual staff. We have more teacher assistants who speak both English and Spanish, uh, security staff, we have an administrator who is bilingual now, which has been a huge help. Um, and uh, we're certainly looking to, you know, certainly diversify our staff as well as to meet some of those needs and build some of those cultural gaps. Just broaden our, uh, broaden our ability to deliver the services we need to deliver to our students.

Another administrator also expresses: "we've tried to have a philosophy of, hey everyone's welcome. That's why we hired bilingual secretaries, a bilingual assistant principal, with the idea that we are able to communicate with those parents and bring them in" (Ernest).

The situation is slowly improving, but is still far from good. The idea of not having enough qualified candidates is still present and even when more bilingual staff are being hired, they are not necessarily Latinos or people who have a connection with the Latino community. Latino parents even complain about Latinos who get hired because they do not represent the Latino community or their interests. For example, they see a new Latino principal as catering to the interest of whites and of non-Latinos. They see the Latinos that are getting hired as assimilated Latinos or Latinos by marriage. They called them ashamed Hispanics (*Hispanos arrepentidos*). And in either case, the new hires are not believed to understand the culture or struggles of Latinos.

F. A Network Problem

The structure of the schools in the City of Branson Springs and the power dynamics that historically had dominated in this area created an interesting context for networks between

Latinos and whites. These social networks are the result of a context in which there are not many Latinos either in positions of power within the district or connected to the major referral networks. Because of this, Latinos normally do not get hired. In addition, in this new immigrant destination, a suburban area, where the vast majority of the population was white, whites also have all the power and privileges concentrated in their hands and within their networks. This is a direct product of the homophily[22] of their social networks in which Latinos are disconnected from the structures of power and from the school staff based on their many intersections. According to McPherson et al. (2001), social networks tend to be similar across race, ethnicity, sex, age, education, occupation, and religion among other social characteristics. This was obvious from the first day I walked into a school in the BSSD. For example, most of the administrators whom I interviewed were white, educated males, but most of the teachers and school staff I talked to were females. Also, most of the parents I interviewed and talked to in meetings and at community forums were Latinas who did not speak English or did not finish high school.

The networks of Latino parents are affected by their many intersections and in the context of the BSSD; they are disconnected from the major networks that connect administrators, teachers, and board members together. Latinos did not have enough social capital in this new immigrant destination and that was affecting their positionality in the school's structure. This directly affected their engagement because they were not considered and were ignored. Below, I

[22]"Homophily is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. The pervasive fact of homophily means that cultural, behavioral, genetic, or material information that flows through networks will tend to be localized. Homophily implies that distance in terms of social characteristics translates into network distance, the number of relationships through which a piece of information must travel to connect two individuals. It also implies that any social entity that depends to a substantial degree on networks for its transmission will tend to be localized in social space and will obey certain fundamental dynamics as it interacts with other social entities in an ecology of social forms" (McPherson et al. 2001:416).

describe how issues of intersectionality and networks affect the way in which school staff measure and assess the involvement of Latino parents.

G. A Measurement Problem

The Branson Springs School District bases its measure of parental involvement on traditional involvement strategies and methods that are based largely on attendance at parent-teacher conferences, open houses, or some volunteer opportunities such as selling food at kiosks during football or basketball games. For example, when I asked administrators how they get parents involved, they mentioned:

Ben: "We have the booster club, which is primarily an organization to raise funds for athletics and activities. They'll come down during lunch periods and sell, you know, Branson Springs Cubs (pseudonym) T-shirts and things like that."

Kenny: "I've always encouraged volunteerism. They can come work in the hallways, come work in our lunchrooms. But there were not many takers. I've asked quite a few people but not always takers."

Ernest: "I don't know. It varies. During sports or clubs, I think this quarter we probably had maybe 15 or 16 different parents volunteering for different things like sports, or outside educational activities, or the dances, things like that."

Also, in a meeting with bilingual teachers, they emphasize that their main measure of parental involvement was Latino parent open house attendance. Unfortunately, not many parents were coming. These measures of involvement are similar to the traditional involvement styles that Hong (2011) criticizes. According to Hong (2011), the traditional model focuses on school activities and sees parents as deficits. Evidently, the measures that teachers and administrators are using in the BSSD still focus on traditional approaches that only see parents as coming to school to help in some side job or to a one-time activity to see the progress of the schools. These

are the same inadequate measures that traditionally have been used by many schools in the United States and by scholars who study parental involvement traditionally (see Schikedanz 1977, SDC 1978, Honig 1990, Berger 1991, Chavkin and Williams 1993 in Chapter 2). These are the same measures that Jones (1989) describes as being used by many schools that perceived parents as mere volunteers or passive recipients of orders. These measures act as blindfolds that do not allow most of the teachers and staff in the Branson Springs school district to see other types of engagement by parents. For example, teachers and administrators ignore the participation of Latino parents at cultural events, BPAC meetings, College for Parents workshops, yearly statewide Bilingual Summits, after-school tutoring, and the volunteer work that they do with the bilingual coordinator[23]. Also, the GED, ESL classes, citizenship classes, phone calls, networking, flyer creation and distribution to invite more Latino parents to cultural events and meetings (each parent gets at least 50 flyers to invite other parents to the events), the many meetings that BPAC has every year, the letters they send to teachers, principals, school board members and superintendent are ignored or not even considered involvement. This type of engagement happens in the background and is completely invisible to school staff. Sometimes, when this engagement becomes visible (as in major events), it is ignored or not acknowledged as real engagement by school officials.

The perception of the district's staff about the low engagement of Latino parents is a combination of ignoring the parental engagement outside the traditional boundaries of involvement and their struggle to recognize the cultural specific engagement strategies of Latino parents. This supports previous research with Latino parents that found that schools emphasize involvement tactics that are culturally biased against Latino parents and schools do not take into

[23] I describe these events more in depth in Chapter 7.

consideration the culture and engagement styles of Latino parents (Souto-Manning and Swick 2006, Ramirez 2003, Hong 2011, Olivos 2006, Shannon 1996, Terriquez, others).

According to Olivos, Ochoa and Jimenez-Castellanos,

> Existing parent and family involvement paradigms tend to exclude "the valuable and legitimate interaction patterns of many [bicultural] families" (Souto-Manning and Swick, 2006, p. 188). They also tend to reinforce the power of school authorities while limiting the decision-making authority of families and communities. This becomes quite apparent in the restrictive band of acceptable behaviors educators best exemplified when bicultural parents are periodically invited to school discussions, but whose actual opinion and involvement is not actually crucial to decision making. For bicultural parents, this scenario creates what Shannon (1996) refers to as the "paradox of minority parental involvement." The fundamental nature of this paradox is the no-win situation bicultural parents are often placed in. They are criticized by school personnel for their lack of involvement and low presence at the school yet are actively dismissed or repressed when they demonstrate acts of leadership, advocacy, or activism on behalf of their children and their community (2011:7).

Many scholars argue that schools need to listen to the voice of the parents to understand their engagement styles instead of looking at the traditional involvement strategies (Ramirez 2003, Hong 2011). After four years of ethnographic work in the Branson Springs School District, I find that the apparent low parental involvement of Latino parents is in part largely based on using inadequate and culturally-irrelevant measures and approaches to try to engage them. Also, the engagement styles and activities that Latino parents organize are mostly invisible or ignored by school staff, which prevents them from building relationships or considering the world and the knowledge of Latino immigrant parents. The school's use of traditional measures for parental involvement (amount of parents who come to open houses, parent-teachers conferences, and school activities) is not only inadequate because of this. The ignorance and inadequacy is the basis of why parents and school staff are disconnected from each other.

H. Other Problems

There are many other problems with the Branson Springs School District. One of these problems is based on income and resources. The Branson Springs school district is a poor district when compared to other school districts in Illinois. Because of their low budget, schools are underfunded, do not have enough technology or resources to help students and families, and some of the buildings are old and overcrowded. This is captured in the following conversation with a science teacher:

Interviewer: Looking at the reality, what do you see would be great to have here?

Allan: Just being able to offer the kids, you know, we're in the class and we're teaching them things they're going to need to know to go to college. But as far as like for me, chemistry-wise, I can teach them all the chemistry, all the concepts, all the math, all the stuff like that, but we're missing a big chunk of the application part because we don't have the equipment to do it.

Interviewer: You don't have a lab or something?

Allan: We do. I mean we have a… but it's in the classroom it's kind of a classroom lab room and we have supplies and things to do some labs, but they're real basic. I mean, we don't have computers in the room. We don't have any type of real technology that if they're interested in science and they're going to go to college and take a science class.

Interviewer: They're going to be behind, right?

Allan: They're either going to be… yeah, they're not going to have any clue what's going on and they're going to be behind because we don't have, we just don't have the technology and the equipment.

According to Allan, the children are the ones affected because of the lack of resources in schools. This lack of resources together with their ability of the BSSD to pay more to teachers and administrators in comparison with other districts creates higher turnaround among staff. This also creates very unattractive conditions to attract new or high quality staff.

Another structural problem in the BSSD is building space availability. The rapid growth of the school district creates overcrowded schools and classrooms. During this growth, new schools were constructed, and shorter class periods were used to accommodate students, some schools were expanded, and at least one other school is going to start construction to increase its capacity for the next school year. This creates a situation where it's hard to find space to hold meetings of GED or ESL classes. In the case of the bilingual program, they use a building that is physically separated from the schools. In this way, most of the meetings of the BPAC are in a segregated area separated from the view of most school's staff. For this reason, teachers and principals did not have any knowledge of the meetings or activities that the parents were conducting in this building. The BPAC normally used a small room in the back of the building. The physical disconnection from the school and the view of teachers and principals created a sense of invisibility regarding the parents. This invisibility contributed to the school staff perception of low Latino parental involvement. It also prevented any interaction between parents and school staff, and stunted or hindered their relationship-building ability.

Academically, most of the schools at the BSSD were lacking as they have not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) standards for many consecutive years and had been on academic warning for consecutive years. Because of this, in the 2013-2014 school year, the majority of the schools in the school district needed to have a restructuring plan. This restructuring plan would have an impact not only on academics; but also on parental-involvement initiatives and practices. As part of the restructuring plan, the superintendent and school board members went on a mission of conducting community forums to explain the idea of restructuring and to explain the different options that the school district was considering. In these community forums, the reactions were mixed and there were many heated discussions. An interesting aspect of the

presentation that they conducted exclusively for the BPAC parents was that the last slide of the Power Point presentation was on the idea of parent engagement. However, they failed to provide details on how the new strategies would look or to what kind of engagement they were referring. In a certain way, this presentation summarized the priorities of the school district that most of the time relegates parent engagement to the back burner.

I. Changing Perceptions/Changing the Structure

The first year (2010) of my research, I found no communication and a big disconnection between school staff and Latino parents. I was appalled by the magnitude of the disconnection: many of the bilingual teachers did not know of bilingual services in the district, did not know about the BPAC or the bilingual coordinator, and did not engage with the immigrant population they were servicing. Because of this cultural misunderstanding and disconnection, school staff were designing programs, activities, and events that yielded little participation from immigrant parents. I have seen drastic changes in the relationship between schools and Latino parents in the last two years. In 2012, I witnessed drastic changes in how the district approaches immigrant parents, which has resulted in increased acknowledgment of the engagement styles of Latino parents and of a higher Latino parental engagement at school. School-board members and administrators have begun to include immigrant parents in decision making dealing with changes in the school district and cultural activities. In October 2012, the school district celebrated the first ever district-wide Hispanic celebration day. This event marks a shift in the relationship between Latino parents and school district officials. The school superintendent and school board members were directly involved in the promotion of the event by requiring principals to attend

the event and bringing representatives from their schools including student artistic performances. As a result, the event was well-attended by school-district officials including many administrators (school-board members, the superintendent, principals, teachers, etc.). In addition, the Latino parents from the BPAC were acknowledged and received a certificate for their hard work and engagement. Finally, Latino parents are starting to be recognized in these activities and in front of other school staff. They are starting to become more visible.

There are many factors that facilitated the changes in the BSSD. It is important to notice these factors are part of a bigger scheme that is required to have successful engagement strategies for Latino parents. One of the factors was the hiring of more minority staff. According to Magdaleno (2006), Tillman (2004), Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004), the hiring of minority board members and administrators helps with the cultural understanding of minorities. This is the case in the BSSD. Since 2010, they hired an African-American superintendent who has brought a different approach and has tried to diversify the district. According to David (the only Latino school board member);

Entonces ahora el superintendente como es afroamericano me dijo, David yo entiendo, yo entiendo, créame que yo entiendo cómo se siente que no hayan recursos para la comunidad como han tenido la experiencia los afroamericanos, yo entiendo lo que usted está diciendo y vamos a cambiar eso. Así que él ha sido muy sensitivo a la comunidad latina y siempre está seguro que las cosas que estamos hablando ocurran y yo creo que la junta educativa está más educada de quien es la comunidad latina y cuáles son las necesidades.

(So now, the superintendent, because he is African American, told me, "David, I understand, believe me that I understand how we do not have resources for the community like the experience that African Americans had. I understand what you are saying and we are going to change that." He has been very sensitive to the Latino community and he is always sure that the things that we are taking about it happen and I think that the school board is more educated about who the Latino community is and what are their needs.)

Even when the superintendent was not Latino or Spanish-speaking, he had forced major institutional changes. Since his arrival, three Latino administrators and two African-American administrators had been hired, diversifying what used to be an all-white administration. In addition to diversifying the staff, the superintendent held administrators more accountable for the school failures with students and families, and encouraged them to change the way schools approach parents. Finally, he made an effort in meeting with the Latino parents and in trying to understand them until certain point. Latino parents still did not trust the superintendent and were not sure if his intentions of working with the Latino parents are real or just "show" and politics. Also, they felt that sometimes he did more for African-American families than for Latinos. The highly-engaged Latino parents had a love-hate relationship with the superintendent and they welcomed him when he kept his promises and criticized him when he did not.

The most significant change was the hiring of a Bilingual Parent Coordinator in 2011 who had similar racial, ethnic, skin color, and immigrant background to many of the Latino immigrant parents in the school district. Serving as a cultural broker, the Bilingual Parent Coordinator mediated interactions between district staff and Latino parents. She worked under the ESL Coordinator and was in charge of coordinating bilingual parent services and their activities. Also, she worked directly with the parents from the BPAC. According to Sonia, "*ella es paisa como nosotros*" (she is *paisa*[24] like us). This expression meant that the Parent Coordinator is just like them in many of their intersections. She connected with Latino parents and was empathetic. More importantly, she did not see them from a cultural deficit approach like other cultural brokers in the City of Branson Springs (see chapter 5 for an explanation of this). For example, in one of the forums with Latino parents about the restructuring of the school

[24] *Paisa* is short for *paisano*. It means that you are from the same place or country. Also, it is use to refer to someone from the country region. In the context that Sonia is using *paisa* it refers to the intersections of race, ethnicity, and class).

district, Frida (the coordinator) served as the interpreter because the district translator was late. Frida was an excellent cultural broker. That is, she used her own words to translate the words of the parents. She was using a language that was accessible and easy to understand for the Spanish-speaking parents. Also, she encouraged parents to ask questions. She was so good that when the official district translator arrived, parents complained about not understanding the translator and Frida had to come back to the rescue and translate again. I learned that translation is much more than translating a word from one language to another. What Frida was doing was reinterpreting the words and summarized the information to make it accessible to the parents. She tapped into the funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992, Gonzalez et al. 2005) and community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006) of the Latino parents to make them understand the complexities of restructuring. The school district superintendent assistant was using complicated language to describe educational policies in Illinois and ISAT testing. The superintendent assistant was using a level of complexity that only a person with an advanced degree in education or vast experience with the Illinois education system would understand. I interrupted a few times during the presentation to ask her to clarify terms and acronyms that I did not understand. Obviously, the superintendent assistant ignored the characteristics of her audience, assuming that everyone understood all the terms or had the same knowledge about educational policies that she did. In addition, none of the slides were translated to Spanish. Evidently, their only job was to present the information to the community because they were forced by the State. In contrast Frida that was tapping into the cultural wealth and knowledge that Latino families have. The superintendent and his assistant were just using a mainstream approach[25]that assumed that everyone should understand the presentation regardless of their educational background.

[25] This approach assumes that if you do not understand their approach, it is your problem, not theirs. This may sound contradictory to the efforts

Frida's understanding of the school district, her ties to and the shared knowledge account with the immigrant community, led Frida to gain the trust of district staff and immigrant parents. Her ability to draw on distinct communities of wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006) is changing how the school district deals with Latino parents by showing school officials the strengths of the immigrant families. She also worked closely with parents, providing them with critical knowledge about their rights and the intricacies of educational system. She explains:

Trabajo principalmente en involucrar a los padres y que reconozcan los padres de Branson Springs la importancia de la educación y que los padres se conviertan en abogados, defensores de sus hijos para cualquier situación que pueda surgir o para poder trabajar juntos como padres para poder mejorar la calidad de educación en ese distrito.

(I work mostly engaging parents and that the Branson Springs parents identify the significance of education and they become the advocates, defendants of their children for any situation that can happen or to work together as parents to improve the quality of education of this school district).

In collaboration with parents, she designed workshops and other events that helped parents understand the school system. She was also a strong advocate for the parents. She was using a Freirian approach to understand and acknowledge the voice of Latino parents. She also empowered parents, validated their ideas, and taught them to fight for their rights. How she collaborated with parents gave parents the room to develop and implement their own ideas for the workshops and meetings that occurred during the year.

In addition, to hiring of more minority staff, another important change in the school district in their attempt to involved more parents was the creation of Coffee with the Principal. This bi-weekly event was an opportunity for parents to sit down with the principal to drink coffee and discuss concerns or ideas about changes or improvements they wanted to see in schools. These meetings were the idea of one of the middle-school principals in the BSSD and

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of the superintendent being more inclusive and his efforts to diversify the staff and meet with Latino parents, but it is not. The "good" intentions of being more inclusive, accepting and embracing of Latinos is still failing because of deeply structural inequality based on how schools are racialized and school's staff perceptions of Latinos.

later they expanded to the two middle schools of the district. These meetings took place in the two middle schools and all parents who had children in the school were invited. The discussion was open ended or could focus on specific topics depending on the parents' interest. The discussions were conducted in English and translation was available if necessary. Originally, parents were invited to participate through an email or flyers sent home. This changed last year when the school district started using a new online communication system to community with parents. This system was used by different districts across the United States to create a login database for family and students where they could see students' academic records along with school activities. This created a way to create a consistent communication strategy across the school district. In addition to this communication, there were also weekly communications on the website of each school and on the school district website. The problem with this type of communication is that parents who do not have a computer, or do not know how to use a computer or email, would not get this information or be able to communicate with the school. This system also does not account for linguistic or literacy related barriers.

Only a few Latino parents participated in Coffee with the Principal. One was a member of BPAC. She stated that this opportunity to talk with the principal felt more like a social club, where many of the ideas or petitions would not be implemented. However, administrators and teachers started to realize that they needed more communication with parents. Also, they were finally realizing that Latino parents were the majority and if they did not start working with them and building relationships with them, the school district would continue failing academically or they would be forced by the State and the superintendent to engage Latino parents more.

This change in structure and perception of schools staff about Latinos is in part the product of the school district's failure to help students academically and direct result of the

pressure of the State that is forcing them to restructure and have an academic improvement. This happened through a process of bureaucratization and rationalization of the BSSD. According to Tuchman, educational organizations are being transformed through a process of bureaucratization, commodification and centralization (2009). This is what Weber explains in his theory of the rationalization of society in which social systems become a highly rationalized iron cage that control humans ([1904-1905] 1958). Weber explained that bureaucracy and the spirit of rationalization is so efficient and powerful that once established, it will control us and it will become irreversible (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). School systems are a prime example of this rationalization. Through rationalization and bureaucratization, education and schools are becoming highly rationalized and isomorphic, and are structured to meet the needs of the labor market and corporate America than to the needs of families and their children. For example, the Branson Springs school district is being forced by the State to change their curriculum and reform their teaching strategies because of their low test scores[26]. The State approach under the NCLB legislation is that one size fits all (meaning that ISAT testing is the main measure of success for schools). This creates schools that become very similar (isomorphic) in practices and does not consider the role of the parents. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that isomorphism[27] is learned through interaction among organizations, and also by the State and professional regulations. They add that organizations become more isomorphic when actors try to change them to make them look more like organizations that are already legitimate. The external pressures are disconnected from the relationship of schools with families and the community that composed schools.

[26] Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and test scores are the main measures utilized by the school district and ISBE.

[27] "The concept that best captures the process of homogenization is isomorphism. In Haw-ley's (1968) description, isomorphism is a con-straining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions. At the population level, such an approach suggests that organizational characteristics are modified in the direction of increasing comparability with environmental characteristics; the number of organizations in a population is a function of environmental carrying capacity; and the diversity of organizational forms is isomorphic to environmental diversity" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:149).

The restructuring of the Branson Springs school district is not allowing schools to completely engage with Latino parents to the full extent. The over-emphasis on testing and raising test scores is putting parent engagement on the back burner. Even when part of the restructuring strategy of the school district includes parent engagement (on the last slide of the presentation), the pressure of the State to be like the "good" school district has increased the bureaucratization and rationalization of the schools. This increased rationalization did not allow school officials to see the engagement of Latinos in ways that differ from the traditional measures of parental involvement. Also, because of the reorganization of the bilingual program and the failure of an increasingly bureaucratic school system, Latino staff's jobs got altered. They were being used as scapegoats and many of them lost their jobs. This has created high tension among the school staff to perform. Similar to Tuchman's (2009) research with universities in where faculty at the universities are under pressure to perform better academic results, teachers in the BSSD are suffering the consequences of the restructuring more than the parents. The problem is that Latino teachers and staff are getting punished at a higher rate than any other group in the school district. For this reason, some of this staff is suing the school district for their firing and are accusing them of discrimination.

In case of Latino parents who know their rights, they understand that their kids are the reason why everyone (teachers, school staff and administrators) has a job in the School District. They know that is their right to complain if they are not informed of the changes that the district is making or if these changes are affecting Latino children more than other children. The highly-engaged parents from the BPAC who know their rights are teaching other Latino parents about theirs to be sure that their children are not treated different by just for being Latinos. This was something new for many Latino parents who were assuming charge of their own destiny and

were very engaged in their children's education. This was the product of many years of struggles, many years of learning and the collaboration of many actors who have contributed little by little to the development of Latino parents, and to the acknowledgement of their culture, voice and cultural wealth, and who contributed to the change of perception of the white majority about Latino immigrants. This does not mean that things are great for Latinos in the BSSD. Conditions are definitely improving, but they are far from a bigger engagement and the role of the schools play a big factor in this engagement.

VII. PARENT'S ACTIVISM IN SCHOOLS

A. Introduction

Parental activism in Branson Springs is not something that happens in one night or in a vacuum. This activism was built through many years of work, fight and sacrifice. For example, Vanessa, as explained in Chapter 4, started becoming engaged in her children's schools after her oldest son did not receive the special education services that he was supposed to get. Since the year 2000, she has been attending leadership classes and training through Oasis for Immigrants, becoming involved in schools through the BPAC, and going to the Illinois Bilingual Summit every year. Vanessa's story is similar to that of other highly-engaged parents in Branson Springs. She, like many other Latino parents, struggled throughout the years to learn her rights, to learn the U.S. educational system, and to fight educational inequality.

Vanessa, like many other Latino parents in Branson Springs, is using the forms of capital as described by Yosso (see her story in Chapter 4). Her story showcases the many stages that engaged Latino immigrant parents experience in the context of a new immigrant destination. She was motivated by one Latina teacher to become more involved and took leadership classes with other parents with Oasis for Immigrants in the year 2000. As a result of this training, in 2004 she developed her resistant capital to confront the BSSD. According to Yosso (2005), this capital is the consequence of the opposition that minorities use to fight and challenge the inequality and oppression when they are dealing with social institutions. Vanessa used this capital to achieve social justice against the inequalities that the schools in BSSD were creating for Latinos. Using her resistant capital, she gathered a group of Latino parents to protest in front of the superintendent office because the bus transportation for their children had been eliminated as a

result of budgets cuts in 2004. She became a leader who used her newly acquired knowledge to teach leadership skills to other Latino parents. At the same time, she learned new skills and more information about parental rights through many sources. First, she received training as a BPAC member, going to workshops to learn how the U.S. educational system functions. Second, she continued receiving training through leadership, GED and ESL classes she took at Oasis for Immigrants. Finally, she learned about parents' rights and the process of approaching school personnel and to build stronger relationships to be more engaged from having attended the Illinois Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents from 2006 to 2013. All these trainings had helped her and members of the BPAC develop a stronger resistant capital and to increase her social capital in the school district and with other Latinos.

Vanessa also carried the familial capital of the Latino community in Branson Springs. According to Yosso (2005), this capital has the ability of groups to create history and have a sense of history. Vanessa was the only original member of BPAC still involved in schools when I conducted my fieldwork. She had experienced the evolution of BPAC struggles and carried the sense of the history of the Latino community since the 1980s. This sense of memory and history helped in the building of a Latino collective identity in the BSSD. She was the historical mentor of Latino parents in BSSD and was also the oldest of the Latino parents who was highly engaged. Using this familial capital, she has been able to develop and motivate other Latino parents to engage more.

In this chapter, I explain the activism of Latino parents in the BSSD. More specifically, I describe the activities and strategies that parents from the BPAC used to become engaged, to engage other parents, and to challenge school district officials who were not acknowledging parental rights. First, I use Yosso's (2005, 2006) community cultural approach to show how

these parents deployed Yosso's six forms of capital. These forms of capital directly link to parental engagement because they build on the knowledge of minority families and the building of relationship with schools. Second, I show how these parents challenge traditional measures of parental involvement and provide an alternative framework measuring parental involvement.

B. Learning from Parents/Teaching Other Parents

Latino parents in the BSSD were both teachers and students. Parents from the BPAC not only learned their rights, created networks, and received training from the State and social services agencies, but they have also learned from parents like them who use and acknowledge their community cultural wealth to teach other parents. As explained in chapter 2, the community cultural wealth approach looks at the way minority families used their agency to navigate schools (Yosso 2005, 2006). They do this, using Yosso's six different forms of capital to navigate schools. Latino parents in the BSSD were using these forms of capital to be more engaged and to fight the inequalities of the school district.

The activism of Latino parents in the BSSD started with Vanessa and other Latinos around the year 2000, when only 40% of the school district was Latino. In 2013, with a school district that was more than 70% Latino, the situation had changed dramatically. While Latino parents were still struggling to be acknowledged as involved, there were many highly-engaged Latino parents following her footsteps. These parents were empowered and were working together to be sure that school personnel acknowledged their engagement and respected their rights. A 2014 protest reflected this. Latino parents protested in front of the superintendent's office because bilingual staff was fired although there was a need to increase the amount of bilingual staff in the school district. Interestingly, leading the protest was Maya (Vanessa's

mentee) together with Vanessa and other Latino parents who had gone to similar trainings as Vanessa had. Ten years after Vanessa led the first protest of Latino parents against the BSSD, her fight continued with more allies and many parents who learned their rights and followed her footsteps. Ten years later, she sat on the sidelines to see the harvest of the teachings, trainings and leadership of many Latinos. Today she has many more allies thanks to training, networking and community learning.

The 2014 protest was more than a protest; this protest gave Latino parents a stronger sense of identity and community. According to César Chavez, "when a man or woman, young, or old, takes a place on the picket line for even a day or two, he will never be the same again. He has confirmed his own humanity. Through non-violence, he has confirmed the humanity of others" (Dalton 2003:127-128). This humanity allows parents to be persons again in a new country where they have been depersonalized, discriminated, and looked upon as inferior to others. This activism allowed them to feel dignified, acknowledged and empowered. This is what Gramsci and Freire explained as the auto-realization of the power of their voice that makes an agent of change in process.

The activism and engagement of Latino parents is based on a cycle of teaching and learning from each other. They used their culture and knowledge together with the new knowledge that they were acquiring to teach and learn from each other. This is what Freire and Gramsci refer as the power that oppressed people can have when they realize the power of their voice and their knowledge. In the following example Emilia, a mother of 3, explains how parents from the BPAC had helped find her voice to be more engaged:

Antes a lo mejor el idioma era una barrera para nosotros y yo me fui involucrando porque en ese tiempo yo tampoco hablaba. Nosotros nos cohibíamos. Íbamos y no participábamos por

miedo de no hablar bien. Hay de todo, hay gente que lo trata a uno muy bien y trataba de entender y había gente que no. Yo siento que estos papás (from the BPAC) que están haciendo este trabajo les ha ayudado mucho a la gente nueva que ha llegado ahí.

(Before, maybe the language was a barrier for us and I started getting involved because at that time I also did not speak it. We inhibited ourselves. We went to meetings and we did not participate because of fear of not speaking well. There is everything: there are people who treat you very well and tried to understand, and people who do not. I feel that these BPAC parents who are doing the work have helped many new people who came here.

Emilia's experience was shared by many new parents in the BSSD who knew that now they had advocates who helped them navigate the school system and learn their rights. Parents from the BPAC did not keep what they had learned to themselves; they shared this valuable capital with the rest of the parents as soon as they could. For example, after the 2012 Illinois Bilingual Summit, the BPAC parents created strategies to teach and help other parents learned about their rights and techniques that can be used to navigate the bureaucracy of the school district.

Latino parents in Branson Springs used their navigational capital (Yosso 2005) to create workshops, trainings, or to pass information (cultural and social capital) through their networks by word of mouth for Latino parents who did not comprehend the educational system. This capital helped them to use their skills to tactically use their engagement styles in the schools and the communities. For example, they taught other parents the process to follow when parents or their children have any problem with any school personnel. They explained to the parents that they needed to get everything in writing, from emails to letters, to have proof of their meetings with teachers and principals. Many of the BPAC parents, with the bilingual coordinator, helped to proofread the letters that Latino parents were going to give to teachers or administrators. Also, BPAC parents taught other Latino parents to ensure that teachers and administrators were signing a paper as evidence of the meetings with parents. The same process was done with emails, and other correspondence with schools that parents needed to save as evidence of their

communication with school officials. They also explained the hierarchy and protocol that they needed to follow. For example, if teachers did not respond to their letter or request, they would go to the principal; if the principal did not respond, they would go to the superintendent; and if the superintendent did not respond, they would go to the school board. This was a very important process that assured that school officials were taking action on the Latino parents' concerns.

Another important lesson that BPAC parents taught other Latino immigrant parents was that they had the right to communicate in their language. The letters and emails that they sent did not need to be translated to English because the school district always needed to find a translator for their meetings with English-only personnel. This was something that was their right and that parents from BPAC emphasized even when the school district did not have enough bilingual personnel. Also, some Latino parents brought their own translators, such as family members, to help. Sometimes they asked the school district for a specific translator. There was only one specific translator whom Latino parents trusted (Isabela),[28] or if Isabela was unavailable, they would ask Frida, the bilingual coordinator, to go with them to the meeting.

Latino parents were directing the effort to teach other parents about their rights and their children's rights. According to the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), minority parents and their children have many rights within the boundaries of the school system:

> "The rights of immigrant students to enjoy equal access to K-12 school programs… the rights of disabled students to receive special education services… students' rights to school choice and/or free tutoring… the right to confidential education… the right of low-income students to receive a free or reduced price lunch… the right to review your

[28] Latino parents trusted this translator because she is Mexican from Michoacán (as many of them are) and she understands the background and language style of immigrant Latino parents.

> child's education records… the right to be free from unlawful discrimination… the right to review student disciplinary actions… English language learners' right to receive an appropriate education… parents' right to review school achievement data, participate in school improvement activities…the right to understandable information for parents…the right to review students discipline actions…parent's rights to review school achievement data, participate in school improvement activities" (MALDEF 2014).

BPAC parents had learned these rights and were using this knowledge to teach other parents in the BSSD. Even when parents' rights are federal law, there was little oversight over the practice and the law was not enforced in many cases, especially if parents did not know about it. In the case of the BSSD, the law was not always followed or the parents' rights explained to parents. In addition, various administrators and school staff did not know the parental rights, ignored them, or took advantage of the ignorance of Latino parents about their rights. If parents from the BPAC did not explain the rights to other Latino parents, nobody else would have.

BPAC parents were starting to see the disconnection between what they learned about the law and their rights in the bilingual summit and what was happening at the district level. They discovered that the law was created but never enforced, and that the school district could get away with not enforcing the law. This was part of the bureaucracy of the school system. An example of this was when the superintendent attended one of the meetings of the BPAC (he only attended a few), to express support for parents rights and Latino parents. Parents from the BPAC asked him to create "enforcement mechanisms" that would make teachers, administrators, and school staff more accountable for violating their rights. He promised that he would look into it but never did. The disconnection between the law and the school administrator's behavior had to do with the bureaucracy of the state and policies that I explained in Chapter 6. This is part of the bureaucratization and rationalization of school systems in the United States (Tuchman 1999; Weber [1904-1905] 1958). The system in the BSSD was so complex that not even teachers and administrators understood it, and the pressure to increase test scores was so intense that most of

the training and emphasis was directed to new curriculum and the common core standards, and not to building better relationships with parents and community. This did not allow policies and laws that were created in the books to become a reality in practice. Also, because the consequences for school personnel were minimal, they did not even have to worry about parent's rights. School personnel were pushed to be more concerned about school performance and test scores than on learning or acknowledging parental rights.

Parents of the BPAC identified the disconnection between the law at the federal and state level and the practices at the school-district level, and used their community cultural wealth to fight an oppressive school system. One way they were doing this was by pushing the school district to create systems and enforcement mechanisms that acknowledged their rights. This was done through a process of constant communication with their rapidly growing networks of Latino parents. They were using their social capital and linguistic capital (Yosso 2005, 2006) to share information about rights among themselves and teaching sharing resources that not every parent had. Their social capital was increasing in this new immigrant destination, and it was becoming the main reason of their engagement at schools. These new networks had increased their presence in committees, open houses, parent/teachers conferences, and school-board meetings. This allowed Latino parents to be more visible and to have a visible presence that they could use to constantly remind school administrators of their rights.

In addition to increasing and using their social capital, Latino parents who were acquiring the cultural capital that U.S. schools acknowledge as valued capital were making an effort to teach other Latino parents this capital, and methods and techniques to navigate the school system. This was a form of parental engagement that was not acknowledged by the parental involvement literature or the school district. This type of engagement was based on Latino

parents using their community cultural wealth and their communal understanding of sharing knowledge to other Latino parents. As soon as Latino parents learned something new about rights, school engagement techniques of the ideas related to the school, they shared this with other parents. Latino parents shared this with their close social ties, but also with other Latinos in church, through workshops, training, and even at the grocery store. Interestingly, Latino parents also shared this information with non-Latino parents.

C. A Different Kind of Engagement

The engagement of Latino parents in the BSSD was very different than what the parental involvement literature acknowledges as involvement. Latino parents understanding of engagement extended beyond doing homework with their children and going to meetings with teachers at school. They saw every level of engagement with their children as parental engagement. In the following conversation, Jimena explains how teachers do not understand Latino parental engagement.

Jimena*: Hay unas maestras que no saben en realidad lo que los padres hacen y ellas tienen que hablar aunque no sepan… Ellas dicen que uno no se involucra con sus hijos y si los niños no faltan a la escuela, claro que usted está involucrado. Y a mis sus hijos y los mando limpios todo y ellos (the teachers) no ponen de su parte. Porque mi niña se quejaba mucho de su maestra que no la quería, que ella tenía una alumna favorita yo tengo mala experiencia aquí de las escuelas de Branson Springs, mala.*
(There are some teachers that do not know in reality what parents do and they have to talk even if they do not know. They said that we do not get involved with our children and if our children do not miss school, of course that we are involved. And if I send my children clean and the teachers do not put off their part. Because when my daughter complained a lot about the teacher that she did not like, that she had a favorite student. I have a bad experience with the schools in Branson Springs).

Jimena saw her involvement as taking care of her children and being sure that they were attending school and were clean. She also complains that the teacher was biased against her

daughter and that this was a pattern in the BSSD. In a similar line of thinking, Frida explains the unique engagement styles of Latino parents.

Frida*: Y te digo que hay muchos niveles (of engagement) porque también el padre que se asegura que su niño llegue a la escuela a tiempo, que le ayuda a sus hijos en la tarea, que se asegura de que tenga su examen médico, es un padre involucrado. No hay que restarle mérito ¿me entiende? … hay muchas gamas, muchas ramificaciones y entonces lo ideal para mi es que todos los padres estén involucrados de alguna manera. Y sabes también lo bonito de Branson Springs y que siempre me lo han dicho es que en las reuniones están viniendo mamá y papá y eso también es algo muy raro en las comunidades.*

(Frida: I tell you there are many levels of engagement, because the parent that is sure that their kid comes to school on time, that help their children with homework, that is sure that their children have their medical exam, it is an engaged parent. We do not have to rest merit? They are many ramifications and the ideal thing for me is that all the parents are engaged in some way. The nicest thing about Branson Springs is that mom and dad are coming to the meetings, and that is something that is rare in the communities).

Frida saw the engagement of Latino parents in a broader sense than what teachers and administrators acknowledged as involvement. Their involvement was multifaceted and started from the moment that Latino immigrant parents migrated to the United States looking for better opportunities for their children.

Latino parents saw engagement differently from the approach that the school district used. First, schools officials did not see parents physically in the school and assumed that they were not involved. Second, teachers who did not see parents coming to open houses, meeting with teachers, or volunteering also assumed that they were not involved. Their conceptualization of parental engagement was based on the degree to which parents attended activities that the school district sponsored where interaction with school district staff was central. On the other hand, Latino parents saw involvement in a broader sense. They saw engagement as: building relationships and networks with the community, obtaining leadership training, finishing their GED, learning English, helping their children with homework, learning and teaching parental

rights, going to College for Parents, to events, workshops, sharing information through text messages and in church, creating and distributing flyers for events, going to school-board meetings, going to the Illinois Bilingual Summit every year, partnering with local business for activities, etc. These activities were about accumulating cultural wealth that they would be able to exchange when advocating for rights to pass down to their children. Because most of the activities that Latino parents did as part of their engagement were invisible to teachers and administrators, they were not acknowledged and by default their engagement was not considered engagement.

The engagement of Latino parents in Branson Spring was more connected to building community and relationships. According to Hong (2012), the most important element of parental engagement is the shared relationship between parents and school officials. Highly-engaged Latino parents were constantly pressuring school officials to give them more engagement opportunities and to acknowledge their knowledge and culture. They were asking for a mutual understanding of their engagement and to establish a middle ground where they could collaborate with teachers and administrators. These parents wanted to work together with school officials to understand each other's world. This mutual respect would foster collaborative projects to achieve the mutual goal of student success. For example, in many meetings with school administrators, parents from the BPAC asked them to find a middle ground where they could compromise to negotiate their relationship. They wanted school officials to acknowledge their community cultural wealth and engagement styles. At the same time, they would participate in the traditional involvement activities that the school had (open houses, parent-teacher conferences, etc.).

Latino parents were negotiating and challenging the way the school district saw and understood involvement. They were creating new ways to be engaged, to build relationships, and to be acknowledged for their agency. Also, they were using this agency to train other parents to learn their rights and to improve their social emotional and leadership skills. They created multiple workshops and initiatives that helped develop Latino parents. One of these workshops is College for Parents that occurs four times a year and brings Latino professionals to do workshops about issues that were affecting Latino parents. Some of these workshops were based on issues that parents from the BPAC saw as necessary for Latino parents. Examples of these workshops included: domestic violence awareness, parental engagement, parental rights healthy relationships with your partners, and college informational sessions.

Latino parents in Branson Springs were starting to learn the system and were using this new leadership and knowledge to build social capital with school's officials. In the following conversation Maya explains the way she approached the principal to build relationships and social capital between the Latino community and school's officials.

Maya: *Mira, fui a hablar con, a mí me encanta eso de la música, fui a hablar con la directora de Lyon (pseudonym), llegue y le dije: "vengo a hablar contigo de mamá a mamá" no quise ni que fuera ningún intérprete "yo te voy a decir como yo pueda" quería tener esa relación más íntima con ella, y le dije cómo me sentía en el distrito, le hablé del comité, sí, ya sé (the principal said) "me gustaría que tú estuvieras más presente con nosotros, a mí me interesan mis hijos, tú sabes que mi hija aquí y ella es buena niña, se ha portado bien y mi otra más chiquita en dos años va estar aquí y aquí me vas a mirar, con más ganas porque es la más chiquita y voy detrás de ella." Entonces ella me dijo "cuenta conmigo" esperemos, vamos a agarrarle la palabra "si tú quieres la escuela después de clases para darles computación a los papás o algo que quieras hacer, cuentas conmigo" como que me abrió la puerta, yo me vine bien feliz a platicarle Frida, "Frida ya vengo de echarme el inglés" miré esa disponibilidad pero hay que agarrarles la palabra.*
Maya: Look, I went to talk with the principal of Lyon school (pseudonym) because I enjoy music. I went and told her: "I am coming to talk to you mother to mother." I did not even want a translator; "I am going to tell you what I can." I wanted to have a more intimate relationship with her and I told her how I felt about the school district. I talked to her about the committee (BPAC) and she said that she knew about us. "I would like you to be more present with us. I am

very interested in my children, you know that my daughter is here at the school and she is a very good girl who behaves well and my youngest daughter is going to be here in two more years and you are going to see me here again, with more hopes because she is the youngest and I am right behind her. Then, she told me "count on me", we are going to take her word. She said: "if you want the schools to give computer classes after school to the parents or anything else that you want to do, count on me". She opened me the door, I came very happy to tell Frida. "Frida I came from speaking English." I looked at her availability, but we have to take her word.

Maya's example of approaching the principal to ask for a space not only demonstrates her initiative and her willingness to go above and beyond to find a place to conduct an after-school program for Latino parents and their children, but also how Latino parents wanted to build personal relationships with school personnel and were even willing to cross the language barrier to build these relationships. Also, this demonstrated a shift in the Latino parental engagement strategies in the BSSD. Latino parents shifted their mentality from mere receivers of information to active participants who were using their community cultural wealth (see chapter 2) with the acquired knowledge from trainings and networks (as explained in chapters 5 and 6) to take matters in their own hands. They had spent many years waiting for school personnel or social services agencies to give them more opportunities or a space to be engaged. This shift was a huge step on the role that Latino parents played in their own engagement, because now they have found a space where they could use their skills, be acknowledged, and be validated for the knowledge. Also, this space was used to teach other Latino families they way to navigate the U.S. educational system and he way to fight for their rights. The shift in their engagement strategies promoted the activism of highly engaged Latino parents in the BSSD.

In addition, BPAC parents were conducting their own after school based on Latino culture and folklore. The BPAC after-school program was a dream of Maya and of other parents from the BPAC. Thanks to the relationship that she built with school administrators in one of the schools, Maya and other Latino parents could use the school's space to conduct their after-school

program every Friday. This after-school program was an example of Latino parents using their aspirational capital (Yosso 2005, 2006), to maintain their hopes, and dreams to plan a better future for themselves and their children in Branson Springs.

The after-school program was run by volunteers and had free classes (guitar, piano, art, Zumba, taekwondo, sports, etc.) for the children of Latino parents who came to the workshops and other activities sponsored by the BPAC. Parents from the BPAC created a system in which children received vouchers (voucher program) to attend the after-school program if their parents attended the workshops organized by the BPAC. In this way, Latino parents had an incentive to attend the workshops and their children could also benefit for their involvement. At the same time, children's engagement in the after-school program created an incentive for parents to be more engaged in the after-school program and helped them to build more networks with other Latino parents in Branson Springs. This after-school program together with the workshops for the parents increases Latino parents' social and cultural capital in Branson Springs. These programs were increasing the human capital of Latino parents who were not only learning new skills, but they were also being acknowledge and validate as persons when they used their culture, skills and knowledge to teach children and other parents. These programs are more than volunteering; these programs created a space in where Latino parents can create community, build their networks and their human capital. Latino parents were able to transfer their skills, build leadership skills, and foster trust among their peers to improve their self-esteem.

The engagement of Latino parents in Branson Springs is very different to what the traditional parental involvement literature and school officials acknowledge as involvement. Even when many Latinos were running the after-school program, training other parents, and joining many committees, they were still not acknowledged as involved because most of their

activities did not involve interacting with non-Latinos and were not seen by teachers and school's administrators. As explained in chapter 2, "real" parental engagement is about building relationships and working with parents as partners (Terriquez 2004, Hong 2012). Latino parents in the BSSD were building significant relationships with teachers, administrators and other school's personnel (including school board members). Even when these relationships increased, they were still far from the relationships of trust and partnership that Terriquez (2004) and Hong (2012) see as ideal for an enduring partnership. Also, these partnerships and relationships were affected by their differences along the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender. However, even when these relationships made Latino parents more visible to a certain extent; they still did not translate to an acknowledgement of their obvious increase of parental engagement.

The context of the new immigrant destination that did not understand Latino culture combined with the low percent of Latino employees in the BSSD continued to be a major factor of the bias against Latinos and their engagement styles. The BSSD had a veil that did not permit teachers and administrators to acknowledge or fully understand Latino parental engagement. Latinos found themselves in a situation in which they have to be louder and more engaged than other parents to be seen as involved by school personnel. Basically, schools officials suffered from an illusion of what involvement is. This illusion is based on the mainstream idea of involvement that did not allow them to see the engagement styles of Latino parents because these parents did not fit the traditional categories and challenge the cultural hegemony. Also, because of the "aggressive" activist's style of engagement of Latino parents schools officials repressed them and did not see Latino parental engagement as "real" involvement. This is the paradox of the engagement of minority parents (Shannon 1996). According to Shannon (1996), when working-class Latino parents (low-status) behave like white parents (high-status) they are

repressed and silenced for being too aggressive and offensive. This is the case in Branson Springs, in where even when more Latino parents were getting more engaged, not too many teachers and administrators were willing to open their schools to allow Latino parents to be more involved or to acknowledge their involvement. At the same time, school personnel complained about Latino parents not volunteering at schools, however, there were not real volunteering opportunities for parents and many Latino parents were placed on a waiting list for volunteering and were never called back. The gap between the increasing number of Latino parents asking for their rights and to be acknowledged for their culture and the lack of opportunities for involvement in schools contributed to the engagement of Latino parents in the BSSD.

Latino parents in BSSD are calling for a rethinking of the way schools understand parental engagement. They are not only using their funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992, Gonzalez et al. 2005), community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005, 2006) and their knowledge about their world (Freire and Macedo 1987) to create their own programs and engagement strategies; they are also creating more networks and learning more traditional involvement strategies. Their activism together with training that Latino parents received through many agencies and sources were pushing school's officials to rethink the engagement strategies that they were using. According to Lolita (ESL director): *"Ya tienen más conocimiento, ya conocen sus derechos y ese es el propósito. Antes no creo que sabían o les daba pena preguntar, o miedo de preguntar…"* (They have more knowledge now, they know they rights and that is the purpose. Before I think that they did not know or they were scare to ask). Many Latino parents lost their fear. They learned their rights and improved their school system's navigational skills. This gave them a sense of empowerment that nobody can take away from them now. In addition, many of the parents were leaders before coming to Branson Springs or became leaders through training or

through activism with other Latinos. According to Frida, *"tienen algo especial estos padres, entonces la gente llega y por eso yo creo que nos quedamos en Branson Springs ¿verdad? Porque vemos esos líderes entre los padres."* (These parents have something special, then, people come and I think that because of that we stay in Branson Springs, right? Because, we see these leaders among the parents).

These parent leaders became the voice of Latino parents in the BSSD and are leading the movement to teach other parents and to make school district officials accountable for the acknowledgement of their rights. BPAC parents are not only teaching other Latino parents and children about their rights, they are serving as role models for other Latino parents and for their children. They are building the next generation of Latinos who will be the future of Branson Springs.

VIII. CONCLUSION

My dissertation showcases the complexities of Latino parental school involvement in a new immigrant destination. I found that Latino parents' school agency is affected by structural and institutional factors that discourage or set up obstacles for their participation. Yet, my dissertation also demonstrates how parents can develop their social capital and gain a critical voice in schools.

My dissertation challenges assumptions of Latino parents as not involved and demonstrate that individual factors like legality, transportation issues, and work schedule do not explain their low involvement. The engagement of Latino parents is better explained by looking at the institutional factors such as bureaucracy, teacher bias, and structural racism which make it difficult for parents to relate and engage with schools. Also, the disconnection between Latino parents and the U.S. educational system is a product of the cultural hegemonic agenda inherent to the structure of the schools. It is also the product of a history of structural racism that was built to preserve the power and privileged networks of whites. These factors are exacerbated in new immigrant destinations where immigrant parents lack the resources and integrating institutions that can give mediate with the power structure and give them access to social capital. Their immigrant status and limited English language skills aggravates the situation.

My dissertation also demonstrates that many of the challenges that Latino immigrant parents encountered with schools are deeper than just a language issue. Many of these parents had little previous schooling experience and were unfamiliar with the U.S. school system. They faced an educational system that assumed parental familiarity and provided little guidance for these parents. Oftentimes, the school staff did not recognize these barriers and instead blamed

their lack of engagement on their limited English knowledge or simply on their lack of interest. My study emphasizes the importance of having school staff who comprehend the proficiencies of Latinos. Making an effort to hire staff that mirrors the demographics of their school districts, provide training for teachers and administrators, developing state and district wide policies that encourage parental participation, and more aggressively monitoring how schools are abiding to these laws.

A. Situating my Findings

After over four years of research with Latino immigrant parents it is clear that the engagement of parents is more complex than what the parental involvement literature explains. While there is a tendency to homogenize immigrant parents, there many reasons that affect the involvement of Latino parents. While factors such as lack of cultural capital, limited English language skills, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, inflexible job schedules, and low literacy skills have been identified by previous studies (see Delgado-Gaitan 1991,Valdez 1996,Llagas and Snyder, 2003; Louie, 2004, Lopez et al. 2001, Epstein 1987, Terriquez 2011; Yosso 2005, 2006, Moll et al. 1992, Marschall et al. 2012, Magdaleno 2006, Tillman 2004, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth 2004), these factors do not completely explain the differences between engaged and not engaged parents. Indeed, I found that these factors were faced by both the engaged and non-engaged parents I interviewed. What accounted for differences in engagement was the presence of cultural brokers who could open a space for parents to become a critical voice.

As Marschall et al. (2012) found the presence of cultural brokers helps increase school engagement among Latino parents, much like the key role played by Frida in my study.

Marschall et al. (2012) also found that having minority staff and administrators increased engagement among minority parents. Yet, at Branson School District, having a Black superintendent and a handful of minority administrators, including one Latino, did not translate into higher Latino parental enrollment. These administrators were not representative of the school population. For instance, they did not speak Spanish, did not live in the community, had high levels of education and led middle-class lives. That is, there were no common experiences connecting the administrators to the parents. Furthermore, the school existed in the midst of a larger environment that casted immigrants in a negative light. The white majority of Branson Springs perceived Latino immigrants as a threat to American culture.

The problem of this perception is reflected with the activism of parents from the BPAC that demonstrate that assimilation is not possible for these parents and it is a process that take a long time. During this time, BPAC parents demonstrate that schools need to find other alternatives to engaged with parents and they need to value their knowledge and understanding of schools. At the same time, parents know that they need training to acquire new skills that would allow them understand the complexities of U.S. schools. Latino parents in Branson Springs are challenging the status quo and the cultural hegemony as explained by Gramsci. They have woken up and are creating a counterhegemonic ideology that is transforming the Branson Spring School District. This ideology lays the groundwork for a new understanding of parental engagement that forces schools to acknowledge and value their wealth of knowledge and is finding spaces to conduct their programs and use their knowledge. This is improving the relationships between schools officials and Latino parents because it is creating better lasting relationships among them.

1. The Importance of Social Capital

A very important factor that contributed to the engagement of Latino parents in Branson Springs is social capital. According to Small (2009) the connections that people have with each other offer them goods that have benefits for them, These good translate into more opportunities and information that benefit them in the long run and also create a sense of solidarity and belonging for them (Small 2009). My research reflects the same results as Small 2009 study that the networks that parents created are more important than the individual factors that affect their engagement. Also, these networks provide parents with other tools Similar to Small's findings, I found that the development of social capital among immigrant parents at Branson Springs was "accidental". That is, it was an unintentional consequence of their trainings and development which developed into a strong BPAC that understands the power of these networks.

Immigrant parents at Branson developed their social and cultural capital through external agencies like Oasis for Immigrants, the Catholic Church, soccer leagues and Hispanic businesses. While external agencies such as Oasis for Immigrants have the expressive goal of connecting parents to the larger community, immigrant parents used other organizations to break into the power structure. Highly engaged Latino immigrant parents in Branson Springs discovered by themselves what other scholars have spent years investigating; that to challenge the inequality of the school system, they need to be connected to the power and informational networks that make the decisions for the school district.

2. The Importance of Community Based Frameworks

It is imperative that parental engagement studies use community-based frameworks to challenge the reproduction cycle and the ideological hegemony of schools. Using community-

based frameworks, I was able to see how Latino parents have the power and the will to transform the educational system. Even when some of the changes can be seen as minimal, they are affecting the way that teachers see Latinos. Also, they are creating a new way of thinking for the Latino community that is becoming more radical and is serving as a role model for their children. Using the community-based frameworks we can see the strengths of the oppressed instead of looking at their deficits.

I found that parental engagement speaks to a multitude of community-based approaches Much as Freire and Macedo argues in their reading the word and the world approach, these parents utilized a great amount of knowledge they brought with them from Latin America. Also, Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual was manifested in these parents who using their experiential knowledge they challenge an unequal school system. The parents' approach also included "funds of knowledge" as parents taught each other and their cumulative knowledge led to transformation.

I also used the community cultural wealth approach to see the wealth and multiple dimensions of the knowledge and agency of Latino parents. As explained in chapter 7, the parents also used a community cultural wealth approach. First, they are using their aspirational capital to not only build their personal hopes and dreams; they are using this capital to build the hopes and dreams of every Latino and child in Branson Springs. Second, they are using their navigational capital to effectively navigate the school system and the city of Branson Springs. Third, they are using their social capital to stay connected among themselves, and to connect to the community at large, and to the networks of power at the school level. Fourth, they are using their linguistic capital to communicate with each other and to share information and to build networks. Also, they are using this capital to ask for more and more effective translators. Also,

because many of them are learning English, they are starting to be able to communicate in different scenarios to voice their concerns and questions. Fifth, they are using their familial capital to build a sense of history and to create a collective identity that is building a new Latino community in Branson Springs. Finally, they are utilizing their resistant capital to fight and challenge a system that had not listened to their petitions and complains. Using their knowledge about parents' rights they are fighting the system and coercing school officials to make the changes that the law required.

Finally, the parents used the ecological model that Hong (2011) describes as the most effective model to engage parents. This model focuses on parents and sees them as assets and associates in their children's education. Even when BPAC parents are using this model very effectively to run their after school program and workshops, the BSSD still use the traditional model to involve the parents. BPAC parents are working hard to build relationships with school officials to be more acknowledged and to see their engagement as real engagement. This is part of making school officials understand the traditional model of parental involvement does not work for Latino immigrant parents. BPAC parents are building more relationships and networks within schools that it is the beginning of moving to a more mutual understanding and closer to a more ecological model of parental engagement. Although it is still incomplete, this project if it continues will come into full fruition. Through these diverse approaches, the parents forced a dialogical, participatory and more inclusive system.

In general, parental engagement needs to be studied and understood from a broader point of view than the one that most studies have used. The cultural hegemonic idea of the there is only one way to be involved that many schools and researchers use to measure parental involvement is obsolete and biased. School districts need to adapt to the changing demographics

of their location and need to start to expand their understanding of the involvement styles of non-white groups. As Orelus, Gramsci, Freire, Hong, Terriquez, Moll et al. and Ramirez explain, school officials need to move away from the traditional approach to an ecological approach to build relationships with minority parents that will allow them to understand their knowledge and culture. Consequently, teachers have to give a space for parents where they can learn from other. They need to keep creating spaces where the knowledge and agency of parents is recognized. They need to move to a space of negotiating were parents also have a voice. I know that this goes against the ideology of the status quo that the schools system in formed by, but with the changing demographics of new immigrant destinations, like the Branson Springs case, where more than 70% of the school population is Latino, the biased cultural hegemonic discourse of the status quo is very far from the reality of the majority of the students.

3. Studying Parental Engagement

My study complicates the parental engagement literature with five important contributions. First, this study demonstrates that the traditional measures of involvement do not fit the engagement styles of Latino parents. Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate the unique understanding and engagement styles of Latino immigrant parents. This engagement is based on building partnerships, community and networks among parents, teachers and administrators. Also, this engagement is structured around their knowledge and community cultural wealth in where they feel accepted and acknowledge as contributors of the education of their children. Instead of being looked at not having the "required" cultural and social capital, my study demonstrates that the traditional measures that are used to measure parental involvement are obsolete and need to be revise to include the engagement styles and knowledge of minority parents. This demonstrates that the parental involvement measures that treat

minority parents as deficient and the limited opportunities that school use to measure if parents are involved are far from real alternatives for Latino parents to relate to school and they need to be revise to be more inclusive.

Second, using an approach of studying from the bottom-up using community-based theories, my study demonstrates what Freire (1970), Gramsci (2001), Yosso (2005, 2006) and other theorists have expressed previously: that we need to take into account the world and knowledge of oppressed groups. By using a bottom-up approach, I was able to use the point of view of Latino parents to understand the way they navigated a system that is bias by design. My study moves away from top-down and deficit theories that blame parents from not be able to succeed in a system that is racist, biased and structured to value the knowledge of the elite and diminish the knowledge of minority parents. By doing so, I encourage future scholars to focus their analysis in understanding the voice of parents. If we listen to these voices that are normally silenced in the literature and demonstrate that parents can be powerful agents of change for schools and their community, we can create a more successful educational system for everyone. The case of the Latino parents in Branson Springs demonstrates the power of engagement and the importance of the active role that parents need to play on their children's education. Using theories like the "Community Cultural Wealth" of Yosso and the "Reading the Word and the World" of Freire and Macedo are necessary to take into consideration the voice of the parents.

Third, my study shows how the bureaucratization of schools is affecting the ability of school staff to relate to parents. This bureaucratization is greatly affecting the way school districts understand minority parents. It is important to look at schools as complex systems that reproduce inequality. Also, we need to pay attention to the role that external actors like the federal and state government plays in the decision making and social reproduction of the schools.

This is necessary to find the root cause of school's inequality and to find the ways that the system can be changed. If we understand this bureaucracy we can tackle institutional racism and we can find ways to dismantle it. The state and the federal government need to change the curriculum and the practices of the educational system to take into consideration the voice of minorities and the changing demographics of today.

Fourth, my research offers a unique methodology to parental engagement studies. My multiyear ethnography combined with in-depth interviews and focus groups allowed me to explore the engagement from the bottom up using the voice the parents as their witness of an educational system. Using multiple methods, I was able to explore more in depth the lives of Latino parents and to better understand the multiple dimensions of parental engagement. Future research should use a multi-method approach to a have a more comprehensive view of parental engagement. In this way, researchers can have a deeper understanding of the lives of the subjects and they can use the voice of the parents to see the many obstacles that minority parents encounter when confronting the inequality of the school system.

Finally, this study expands research with Latino parents to new immigrant destinations and demonstrated the uniqueness of this context. My work demonstrates the needs of new immigrant destinations to adapt to the influx of new immigrants are greater than the needs of urban traditional gateways where there is already an infrastructure to support new immigrants. I demonstrate how it is necessary to conduct more research in this context to find new ways to create support systems for immigrants who are push to move to these areas because of the changing labor and housing market. Understanding the dynamics of new immigrant destinations will help immigrants to have a smoother transition to the new country. Looking at the way that Latino immigrant parents are adapting to new destinations and looking at the way they

understand engagement, researchers can produce relevant data that will shape policy and will promote better relationships between parents and school staff in new immigrant destinations. My research demonstrates that we need to pay more attention to Latino parents because their children will represent the majority of the U.S. children population in the near future. Understanding their culture and knowledge will be of great benefit to a shift in curriculum and teaching methods that the obsolete United States educational system need to stay relevant to the changing demographics of today's society. Researchers need to challenge the cultural hegemony of educational systems to find new ways to conduct research that will change the structure of schools. In addition, they need to use community based frameworks to understand the point of view of the oppressed. Understanding the side of the oppressed, researchers can find ways to change the educational structure to create a more effective and relevant system that will take into account the point of view of underserved groups. The educational system needs a major transformation that will allow more relationships with the communities and the families who they serve. Also, schools need to put more weight on the culture and knowledge of the diverse parents who composed the school district. Instead of trying to assimilate every parent to a system of inequality, we need to emphasize more efforts to change the educational system to be more welcoming and adapting to the changing demographics of the United States.

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X. VITA

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EDUCATION
PhD. Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, December 2015
M.A. Sociology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, May 2006
B.A. Sociology, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, PR, May 2001

Dissertation Title: Latino Parental Engagement in a New Immigrant Destination

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS
Sociology of Education, Race and Ethnicity, Latin America and Latino Studies, Culture, Identity, Qualitative Research Methods, Immigration, Policy Studies

HONORS
2013-2014 Abraham Lincoln Graduate Fellowship
2013 UIC Sociology Department Graduate Student Teaching Award
2013 Honorable Mention UIC Undergraduate Mentoring Award for Graduate Students
2013 Provost's Award for Graduate Research

CERTIFICATES
Interdisciplinary Graduate Concentration in Latin American and Latino Studies
2013 Preparing Future Faculty Certificate from the Midwest Sociological Society

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
American Sociological Association
American Anthropological Association
Midwest Sociological Society
Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society
Puerto Rican Studies Association
Board Member Northwest Side Housing Center

LANGUAGES
Spanish
English

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Teaching Assistant/Sociology Instructor, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago, IL, 08/09-5/14

- **Teaching Assistant, Spring 2014**
  Course: Senior Research Capstone: Community Engaged Learning (SOC 490)
  Class Size: 24 Students
- **Sociology Instructor, Spring 2013**

Course: Sociology of Latinos (SOC 229)
Class Size: 80 Students

- **Sociology Instructor, Fall 2012**
  Course: Introduction to Sociological Theory (SOC 385)
  Class Size: 30 Students
- **Sociology Instructor, Spring 2012**
  Course: Sociology of Latinos (SOC 229)
  Class Size: 80 Students
- **Sociology Instructor, Fall 2011**
  Course: Introduction to Sociological Theory (SOC 385)
  Class Size: 30 Students
- **Sociology Instructor, Spring 2011**
  Course: Racial and Ethnic Groups (SOC 225)
  Class Size: 172 Students
- **Sociology Instructor, Fall 2010**
  Course: Introduction to Sociological Theory (SOC 385)
  Class Size: 30 Students
- **Teaching Assistant, Spring 2010**
  Course: Sociology of Children and Youth (SOC 215)
  Class Size: 80 Students
- **Teaching Assistant, Fall 2009**
  Course: Sociology of Sexuality (SOC 224)
  Class Size: 160 Students

Adjunct Faculty, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake Campus, 10/14- Present

- Introduction to College, College Experience (MCC 101)
- Introduction to Sociology (SOC 151)
- GED in Spanish (ASF 022, ASF 023)

Adjunct Faculty: Sociology, Columbia College of Missouri, Crystal Lake, 1/08-Present

- Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 111)
- Minority Cultures Relations (SOCI 270)

Adjunct Faculty: Sociology, DeVry University, Addison Campus, 08/08- 12/10

- Cultural Diversity in the Professions (SOCS 350)
- Culture, Society and Technology (HUMN 432)
- Hybrid environment (half online and half onsite)

Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, 08/03- 05/05

- **Teaching Assistant, Spring 2005**
  Courses: Introduction to Sociology and Race and Ethnicity
- **Teaching Assistant, Fall 2004**
  Courses: Introduction to Sociology and Race and Ethnicity
- **Teaching Assistant, Spring 2004**

Course: Cultural Anthropology

- **Teaching Assistant, Fall 2003**
  Course: Introduction to Sociology

GED Teacher and Tutor, Centros Sor Isolina Ferré, Caimito, Puerto Rico, 09/01-07/03

- Taught Social Studies, Science and Math GED classes for groups of 10-20 students
- Worked with children, adolescents and adults in high risk communities
- Promoted students' self-esteem and provided encouragement
- Motivated students to continue their studies by acting as a role model and engaging them in creative lesson plans
- Provided after school tutoring for children ages 10-13
- Organized and developed summer programs for high risk children and adolescents
- Created and implemented a music and physical education program

WORK EXPERIENCE

Interim Executive Director of Adult Education, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL, 9/15-Present

- Provide leadership for collaborative, strategic planning efforts for the development and continuous improvement of all programs in the Adult Education Department which includes ABE, ASE, ASF, ESL, and Citizenship
- Oversee collaboration with non-profit organizations, workforce and economic development agencies and local businesses. Monitor adult education needs and develop programs and services that align
- In partnership with appropriate administrators and staff, oversee all contracts, staff and agreements for off-campus locations.
- Serve as primary Adult Education liaison for MCC with the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois State Board of Education, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Oversee completion and submission of data, reports and grants on a timely basis.
- Represent McHenry County College on federal, state, community, and College committees and task forces, Area Planning Council #528 and appropriate state and national associations. Develop and negotiate partnership agreements as appropriate.

Coordinator of Adult Education Instruction, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL, 2/15-Present

- Select, hire, oversee daily activities and provide daily direction to instructors
- Observe and evaluate instructors in collaboration with Executive Director
- Schedule classes, classrooms and place instructors
- Select off-campus locations and coordinate off-site classes
- Facilitate new instructors orientations and faculty development workshops
- Assist Executive Director of Adult Education with grant proposals and reports
- Coordinate instructor training to implement new curriculum in ESL, ABE, ASE, ASF, as well as bridge and career pathway programs
- Act as communication link between the College, off-site locations, the department, other departments at MCC, instructors and the community

Coordinator of Multicultural Affairs, McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL, 8/14-1/15

- Develop department mission, goals, objective, and effective multicultural, equity and diversity programming in the Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Review programs, services, and activities related to retention and success of underrepresented student populations and make recommendations for college initiatives and their justification development and/or modification.
- Coordinate and develop retention activities related to underrepresented students.
- Develop programs and initiatives that promote access to limited English speaking students.
- Infuse new understanding and commitment to institutional diversity.

Program Coordinator, Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago, IL, 9/07-01/2013

- Hired, supervised, and evaluated part-time teachers who provided direct services to students in an after school program.
- Managed day to day program operations, scheduling of classes, academics, discipline, record-keeping, and monitoring of policies and procedures.
- Developed core relationships with school administrators, teachers and parents.
- Collected data and assessments (test scores, surveys, student demographics and grades)
- Managed grants and budgets to assure that programs are meeting their programmatic, evaluation and community-building goals.
- Marketed after school programs to schools, families and the community

Case Manager, Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago, IL, 11/06-9/07

- Assured that programs are meeting their programmatic, evaluation and community-building goals.
- Provided direct case management services for families of elementary and high school students who are referred by their schools because of problems with truancy, suspension or expulsion.
- Assessed student and family situation and develops a plan with family to address problems that are interfering with appropriate school behavior.
- Linked families with other services, as needed.

Children's Activity and After School Coordinator, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope Family Shelter**,** Las Cruces, NM, 03/06- 09/06

- Created and developed the position and job description of Children's Activity and After School Coordinator
- Worked with children and adolescents in a family shelter for families defined as "homeless" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the McKinney Act
- Provided after school tutoring for children ages 5-17
- Organized activities of interest and educational value for a large age range
- Leveraged resources and developed a computer room for children to learn basic computer skills as well as practice math, reading, and spelling via computer programs

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Dissertation Research, UIC**,** 2010-2014

- Conducted 50 face to face interviews with Latino immigrant parents and school' staff.
- Conducted a four year participant observation and a multiyear ethnography with a group of Latino immigrant parents.
- Conduct focus groups with Latino parents and community members

2011 Chicago Area Study (CAS), UIC, 2011-2012

- Conducted interviews with Latinos parents and school staff in a new immigrant destination
- Conducted focus groups with Latino parents, school personnel and elected officials

2010 Chicago Area Study (CAS), UIC, 2010-2011

- Helped in the design of a survey about neighborhood perceptions of immigrants
- Conducted face to face interviews using survey methodology

Latino Initiative Program, Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago, IL Summer 2009

- Conducted focus groups to design a program for Latino youth
- Conducted surveys with youth and adults

Master's Thesis Research, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM, 05/07-05/09

- Conducted 20 face to face interviews with Puerto Ricans in El Paso, Texas
- Conducted a two year participant observation with a Puerto Rican voluntary organization.

Field Interviewer, Williams Demographics, Las Cruces, NM, 11/05- 03/06

- Carried out field work for BBC Research and Consulting (Denver, CO) through Williams Demographics (Las Cruces, NM) to support a Community Development Master Plan
- Performed door to door household enumerations including income information for eligibility data for Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) funding
- Interviewed approximately 100 homeless persons in face to face interviews located at homeless shelters and in the street to collect data needed for HUD funding
- Conducted a count of visible homeless persons in the street on two separate occasions to supplement the data

Research Assistant of Archaeology, J.J. Ortiz-Aguilú**,** Río Grande and Barranquitas, Puerto Rico, 01/00-01/01

- Excavated and collected archaeological materials from a Taíno Indian site
- Prepared materials for topographic maps
- Applied anthropological concepts from the classroom to the field

PUBLICATIONS

Flores-González, Nilda, Julio Capeles, Carolina Calvillo, RaJhai Wilson, and Irma Olmedo. 2015. "Immigrant Education Policies in the Chicago Metropolitan Area." Pp. 171-194 *in Global Cities and Immigrants: A Comparative Study about Chicago and Madrid*, edited by Francisco Velasco Caballero and María de los Ángeles Torres. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Flores-González, Nilda and Julio Capeles, Carolina Calvillo, RaJhai Wilson, Irma Olmedo. 2014. "Políticas Educativas e Inmigración en el Área Metropolitan de Chicago." Pp. 171-194. En Ciudades Globales e Inmigrantes: Un Estudio Comparado Sobre Chicago y Madrid, editado por Francisco Velasco Caballero y María de los Ángeles Torres. Ediciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

Ridings, John and Lizette Piedra, Julio C. Capeles, Raquel Rodriguez, Fernando Freire, Soo-Jung Byoon. 2011. "Building a Latino Youth Program: Using Concept Mapping to Identify Community-Based Strategies for Success". *Journal for Social Service Research 37*(1): 34-49.

PRESENTATIONS

September 2015 Forum for Excellence Conference, Illinois Community College Board: Career Technical and Adult Education: Building Pathways for All Students, Normal, IL. "Putting the Action in Corrective Action".

November 2013 American Anthropological Association Conference, Chicago, IL "Latino Parental Involvement in a New Immigrant Destination".

March 2013 Midwest Sociological Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL "Participatory Action Research and Parental Involvement of Latino Immigrants".

October 2012 Puerto Rican Studies Association Biannual Conference, SUNY Albany, NY. "El Paso-Ricans: Puerto Ricans in El Paso, Texas".

May 2012 Responding to Immigrants: Bridging Research and Practice to Meet the Needs of Immigrants in New Growth Communities Conference, U of I, Urbana-Champaign, IL. "Immigrant Integration and Civic Engagement in a Chicago Suburb" with Melissa Abad

April 2012 Chicago Ethnography Conference at UIC, Chicago, IL
"Using Qualitative Research to Promote Parental Involvement in a New Immigrant Destination"

March 2012 Midwest Sociological Association Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN "School Involvement of Latino Immigrants in the Chicago Suburbs".

November 2011 The Federation for Community Schools Forum, Chicago, IL. "If You Build They Will Come? Designing Programs that Effectively Engage Students". Workshop.

April 2011 Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) Annual Meeting. Chicago, IL
"Using Music to Engage Students in an After School Program" Workshop.

March 2011	Midwest Sociological Association Annual Conference, Saint Louis, MO. "Parental Involvement of Mexican Immigrants in their Children's Education in a New Immigrant Destination".
December 2010	Sociology Symposium at UIC, Chicago, IL. "Cultural Capital and Parental Involvement"
March 2010	Midwest Sociological Association Annual Conference, Chicago, IL. "The Importance of Location in the Construction of Ethnic Identities: Puerto Ricans in the United States-Mexico Border."
April 2009	American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA. "Puerto Rican Ethnicity in the El Paso-Juarez Border."
April 2008	Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, IL "Border Ethnicity: Puerto Ricans in El Paso, Texas."
November 2007	Simposio de la Revista de Ciencias Sociales, UPR, Rio Piedras, PR. "La Importancia del Lugar en la Construcción de la Identidad Étnica Puertorriqueña".
April 2006	Pacific Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Hollywood, CA "The Construction of Ethnic Identities: Puerto Ricans in El Paso."
April 2006	Master's thesis research presented at the Graduate Research of Art and Sciences Symposium at NMSU, Las Cruces, NM. "The Construction of Ethnic Identities: Puerto Ricans in El Paso."
April 2005	Sociology-Anthropology Spring. Symposium at NMSU, Las Cruces, NM. "Migration, Ethnic Identity and Cultural Survival of Puerto Ricans in El Paso and Surrounding Areas".

XI. APPENDICES

A. Interview Guide for Latino Parents

1. How many children do you have attending school?
2. What is their age and grade?
3. What is the name of the school or schools?
4. Where this school is located?
5. How long your children have been attending this specific school.
6. How was your experience registering you children in the school? Explain
7. What kind of documentation the school asked you to register your children in the school?
8. Do your children like the school? Explain
    a. What do they like the most about the school?
    b. What do they like the least about the school?
    c. How does they like this school compared to other schools that they have attended?
9. Do you like your children school? Explain
    a. What do you like most about the school?
    b. What do you like the least about the school?
    c. How do you like this school compared to other schools that they have attended?
10. Do you feel welcome in the school?
11. Explain a situation in where do you felt welcome at the school?
12. Explain a situation in where you felt unwelcome?
13. How do you feel in general about the school?
14. How they treat you when you go to the school?
    a. How do the principals treat you?
    b. How do the teachers treat you?

c. Tell me about the last time that you visited the school. Why did you go to the school? Who did you meet? Who did you talk to? How did each of these people treat you?

15. How they treat your child/children in the school?

    a. How do the other students treat him/her?

    b. Is s/he treated differently by other students because of his/her race? Because s/he is an immigrant? Because s/he is undocumented? Because of where s/he lives?

    c. How do the teachers treat him/her?

    d. How do the principals treat him/her?

    e. Is s/he treated differently by the teachers and principals because of his/her race? Because s/he is an immigrant? Because s/he is undocumented? Because of where s/he lives?

    f. Does s/he receive any kind of support….?

16. Do you see segregation or separation among the students by race?

17. What about fights? Do your children have been involved in fights in the schools? What was the reason of the fight? What was the reaction of the school?

18. Do your children have been suspended from the school? Explain

19. How many times your children went to the office last years because of behavioral problems? What was the reason that he/she was send to office? Explain the situation?

20. Do you children participate in any extracurricular activity in the school? Which

21. Do you know if the school has any after school programs? Which programs

22. Do your children go to an after school program in the school?

23. Which program or programs? What is he/she experience in this program?

24. How many days per week does your child typically go to the after school program?

25. Does the school have any language programs for the students? Describe them.

26. Does the school have any language programs for parents (like ESL). Describe them.

27. What about GED programs? Describe?

28. Do you participate in any of these programs? Why or why not?

29. Do you have experienced any kind of discrimination at the school? If yes. Can you explain the situation? From whom. What happened? When this happened?

30. What about your children? Do you have experienced any kind of discrimination at the school? If yes. Can you explain the situation? From whom. What happened? When this happened?

31. Do you belong to any organization in the school like the local school council/ parent teacher association. If yes, explain your role. If not, Why not.

32. If yes. How you are treated in these meetings?

33. If there any Latino parent in these meetings?

34. Do you have experienced any problems with the school? Explain

35. How often do you:

    a. Go to your children school

    b. Volunteer at the school

    c. Participate in a parent or family activity in the school

36. Have you attended a parent or family event/activity at the school this year? Which one. What was your experience when you visit the school?

37. Do you speak English? How good is your English?

38. How do you communicate with teachers or principal of the school?

39. Does the school have translators available when you go to the school? Who are these translators? Where are they? How many?

40. Does the school send communications in Spanish? Which communications? Who send them? The teacher, the principals' office?

41. Does the school have any activity that celebrates Latino culture?

42. Would you recommend the school to other parents? Explain.

43. In what ways the school can be improved.

44. Do anyone in the school have helped you (like a counselor, teacher, administrator)

45. In what way this person had helped you?

46. How are the grades of your children?

47. Do your children had failed or repeated any grade? Explain

48. Do the schools invite to be part of any of their meetings, committees, groups, etc.

49. How they let you know about these activities?

50. What academic expectations do you have for your children?

51. Do you want your children to go to college? Why or why not?

52. Do you know the process that they have to follow to continue college?

B. Interview Guide for Latino Parents (Spanish)

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva usted viviendo en esta ciudad? ¿En qué año vino a los Estados Unidos?.

2. ¿Cuáles han sido los beneficios de vivir esta ciudad?

3. ¿Cuáles han sido los retos?

4. ¿Qué recursos, oportunidades le ofrece la comunidad?

5. ¿Qué se necesita en Branson Springs?
6. ¿Qué puede hacer Branson Springs (o alguna otra comunidad) para ayudar a los inmigrantes?

7. ¿Qué puede hacer los oficiales públicos (policía, oficiales de la junta de escuelas, oficiales electos, políticos?

8. ¿Qué puede hacer las organizaciones de servicios sociales?

9. ¿Conoces a alguien que está involucrado? ¿En actividades con inmigrantes?

10. Si conoce a alguien. ¿Que los ha inspirado, motivado a estar involucrados?

11. ¿Usted está involucrada?

12. ¿Qué podemos hacer para que usted se involucre?

13. ¿Tiene algún hijo/a que va la escuela? ¿Cuántos? ¿Cuantas personas viven en la casa?

14. ¿Cuáles son sus edades y el grado?

15. ¿Cuál es el nombre de la escuela o escuelas que sus niños asisten?

16. ¿Donde está la escuela?

17. ¿Cómo van a la escuela sus niños?

18. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevan sus niños asistiendo a esta escuela?

19. ¿Sus niños han asistido a alguna otra escuela en esta ciudad? En algún otro país?

20. ¿Cómo compara esta escuela con la escuela que sus niños asisten ahora?

21. ¿Cómo fue la experiencia cuando registro a su niño en la escuela? Explique

22. ¿Qué tipos de documentos la escuela le pidió cuando registro a sus hijo/ hijos? Como lo trataron?

23. ¿A su hijo le gusta la escuela? Explique.

    a. ¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de la escuela?

    b. ¿Qué es lo que menos le gusta de la escuela?

    c. ¿Cómo sus niños comparan esta escuela con alguna otra escuela que hayan asistido?

24. ¿A usted le gusta la escuela de su hijo? Explique.

    a. ¿Qué es lo que le gusta más de la escuela?

    b. ¿Qué es lo que menos le gusta de la escuela?

25. ¿Usted se siente bienvenido en la escuela? ¿Cómo lo tratan? Explique.

26. Explique alguna situación en donde usted ha sido bien recibido en la escuela.

27. Explique alguna situación en donde usted ha sido mal recibido en la escuela.

28. ¿Usted habla inglés? ¿Qué tan bien usted habla inglés?

29. ¿Cómo usted se comunica con los maestros o el principal de la escuela?

30. ¿Usted sabe si la escuela tiene algún traductor? ¿Quién o quiénes? ¿Cuántos? ¿Quién le ha traducido cuando va la escuela?

31. ¿Le envía la escuela cartas o documentos en español? ¿Cuáles? ¿Quien las envía? ¿La maestra, la oficina?

32. ¿En general como usted se siente en torno a la escuela? ¿Cómo lo tratan?

33. ¿Usted conoce al principal? ¿El principal habla español? ¿Cómo lo ha tratado el principal?

34. ¿Usted conoce a los maestros de sus niños? ¿Habla español el maestro? ¿Cómo lo ha tratado el maestro o maestra?

35. ¿Cuénteme acerca de la última vez que usted fue a la escuela? ¿Porque o para que fue a la escuela? ¿Con quien se reunió? ¿Con quien hablo? ¿Cómo lo trataron en estas personas?

36. ¿Usted ha sentido algún tipo de discriminación en la escuela? ¿Me puede explicar lo que paso? ¿De quién? ¿Qué paso? ¿Dónde paso?

37. ¿Usted ha visto algún tipo de segregación por raza en la escuela?

38. ¿Cómo tratan a sus hijos en la escuela?

39. ¿Su hijo ha recibido algún tipo de discriminación en la escuela? ¿Me puede explicar lo que paso? ¿De quién? ¿Qué paso? ¿Dónde paso?

40. ¿Cómo los demás estudiantes lo tratan?

    a. ¿Usted cree que ha sido tratado diferente por otros estudiantes por su raza? ¿Porque es un inmigrante? ¿Por el lugar donde vive?

    b. ¿Cómo los maestros lo tratan?

    c. ¿Como el principal o asistente de principal lo tratan?

    d. ¿Usted cree que ha sido tratado diferente por los maestros por su raza? ¿Porque es un inmigrante? ¿Por el lugar donde vive?

    e. ¿Usted sabe si su niño recibe algún tipo de apoyo en la escuela?

41. ¿Ha estado su hijo envuelto en alguna pelea en la escuela? ¿Cuál fue la razón? ¿Cuál fue la reacción de la escuela?

42. ¿Cuantas veces su niño ha sido enviado a la oficina del principal en el último año? ¿Cuál fue la razón? Explique lo que paso.

43. ¿Su hijo ha sido suspendido de la escuela? Explique la razón.

44. ¿Quién le ayuda a hacer la tarea a su niño? ¿Qué tanto ingles habla su niño? ¿Español? ¿Cómo están sus calificaciones?

45. ¿Usted sabe si su hijo es parte de algún programa de después de la escuela? ¿O antes de la escuela o que le ayuda a hacer la tarea? ¿Cuáles? ¿Cómo le gusta?

46. ¿Cuantos días en la semana el niño va a la este programa de después de la escuela?

47. ¿Usted sabe si la escuela tiene algún programa bilingüe para los estudiantes? ¿Puede describirlo?

48. ¿Usted sabe si la escuela tiene algún programa de aprender inglés para los padres (como ESL)? ¿Puede describirlo? ¿Usted participa en este programa? ¿Porque si o porque no?

49. ¿Qué tal programas de GED? ¿Puede describirlo? ¿Usted participa en este programa? ¿Porque si o porque no?

50. ¿Qué tal algún programa que tenga que ver con inmigración? ¿Puede describirlo? ¿Usted participa en este programa? ¿Porque si o porque no?

51. ¿Usted pertenece a alguna organización en la escuela como el consejo local, asociación de padres y maestros, alguna otra organización? ¿Explique su rol? ¿Explique porque no pertenece?

52. ¿Cómo lo tratan en estas reuniones?

53. ¿Hay algún otro padre Hispano en este grupo?

54. ¿Que tan seguido?

    d. ¿Va a la escuela de su hijo?

    e. ¿Hace trabajo voluntario en la escuela?

    f. ¿Ha Participado en alguna actividad familiar o concierto en la escuela? ¿Cuál? ¿Cuál fue su experiencia?

55. ¿Usted sabe si la escuela tiene alguno actividad que célebre la cultura Latina/Hispana?

56. ¿Usted le recomendaría esta escuela a otros padres? Explique.

57. ¿En que formas usted cree que la escuela puede ser mejorada?

58. ¿Alguien lo ha ayudado a usted o su hijo en la escuela (algún consejero, maestro, principal)?

59. ¿Cómo esta persona lo ha ayudado?

60. ¿La escuela lo ha invitado a ser parte de alguna reunión, grupo, comité, etc.?

61. ¿Cómo le dejas saber sobre estas actividades?

62. ¿Usted ha sentido algún tipo de discriminación en la escuela? ¿Me puede explicar lo que paso? ¿De quién? ¿Qué paso? ¿Dónde paso?

63. ¿Cómo están las calificaciones de su hijo?

64. ¿Su hijo ha reprobado alguna clase o algún grado? Explique.

65. ¿Que usted espera que su hijos logren en la escuela?

66. ¿Que necesitan los niños para tener éxito?

67. ¿Usted le gustaría que fueran al colegio/ Universidad? Explique.

68. ¿Usted conoce el proceso que su hijo tiene que seguir para entrar a la universidad?

C. Interview Guide for School Staff

1. How long have you been working at this school?
    a. How long have you been in this position?
    b. What was your previous position?
2. How has the school changed since you arrived?
    a. How about in the last 10 years?
    b. In the last 5 years?
3. How has the school responded to these changes?
4. How do you compare this school with other schools in the area? In the County? In Illinois?
5. [City] has experienced drastic increase in its immigrant population in the last 10 years. How has this impacted the school?
    a. Racial/Ethnic composition of students
    b. Racial/Ethnic composition of staff
    c. Changes in programs/offerings
    d. Bilingual programs
        i. How many staff?
        ii. How many main office staff?
6. How has the recent economic crisis affected the school?
    a. What programs have been reduced or cut?
    b. Reductions in staff?
7. Is this a neighborhood school? What are the boundaries?
8. What kind of programs are in place in the school?
    a. College prep/gen ed/vocational/bilingual
9. Does the school have any college preparation program? How it works? Who is responsible for this program? Does the school have any partnerships with businesses or colleges?
10. Does the school have any additional services for parents and children
    Parents
11. How does the school deal with Spanish speaking parents?
    a. How do you communicate with parents that speak only Spanish?
    b. How teachers communicate with Spanish speaking parents?
    c. Who translates?
    d. Does the school send letters to parents in English, Spanish, Both. Who translate them?
12. Explain a situation in where you have to deal with a Spanish speaking parent? What is the procedure that you follow?
13. Can you tell me a success with an immigrant family?
14. Can you tell me a failure story?
15. How involved are the parents in the school?
16. How involved are Latino immigrants' parents in the school?
17. Do you have any volunteers' opportunities in the school for parents? Explain them?

18. Do you have any committee or organization that involved parents? Which are these? Do you have Latino immigrant parents in these committees or organizations (PTA, BPAC, LSC, etc.)?

19. What can be done to increase the participation of Latino Immigrants in the school committees?

20. What kind of problems are in the school? Fights, Drugs, Alcohol, Gangs?

21. Do you any programs for parents? ESL, GED, computer classes, etc. What are the requirements to register?

22. Does the school have any after school programs? Which ones?

23. Sports? Which one? What is the best sport?

24. How many days is the after school program?

25. Any parent events?

26. Music or Art programs?

27. Does the school have any program that deal with immigration issues?

28. Weaknesses of the school? How the school can be improve? In the school?

29. Do you see any kind of segregation in the school?

30. Do you have any case of discrimination among teachers or students?

31. Do you have many fights in the school? What about bullying?

32. Any cases of truancy?

33. Does the school offer any homework help for students?

34. Does the school offer any skills training to teach the parents to learn basic skills to help their children with homework?

35. What are the strengths of this school?

36. What are the challenges in this school?

37. What kinds of documents parents need to bring to register students?