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Crossing School, Language, and Migration Borders: The Experiences of Latinx and Caribbean

Emergent Multilingual Mothers in K-12 Public Schools

by

Michelle Angelo-Rocha

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Lifelong Learning
College of Education
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November 2, 2023

Keywords: parental engagement, multicultural education; immigration; digital literacy divide; mental health, microaggression, community-based digital research, policy, deportation

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this study to all the emergent multilingual immigrant mothers who have left their home countries and crossed various borders - physical, linguistic, political, social, and cultural - searching for a better life for their children. These mothers come from all corners of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean. Whether they are refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented, displaced, or international students trying to survive in the U.S., they are all *guerreiras*. Leaving behind their language, culture, *família*, and the land of their ancestors, some of them walked for days and nights without food and water to cross the U.S./Mexico border, carrying their children on their backs. They did all of this with the singular purpose of securing a brighter future for their loved ones. I also want to dedicate this study to those mothers who chose not to participate in this study out of fear of deportation, family separation, and political trauma. Your voices and life experiences matter.

I also dedicate this study to the community-based organizations that provided their support throughout this study. I am incredibly grateful to the *Hispanic Services Council*, *SantLa - Haitian Neighborhood Center*, *Lagoinha Tampa Brazilian Church*, and the *American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) - Florida's Chapter* for their invaluable support. They chose to volunteer and help me to reach the mothers. Your work is truly important and inspiring. I am grateful for your support.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my grandparents, Geraldo and Anair Pereira Ângelo, who worked tirelessly from a young age to provide for their family and did not have the opportunity to learn how to read and write. This Ph.D. is to honor their names (Ângelo), their

stories of strength and resilience, and the history of all my ancestors who were illiterate. I also dedicate this study to my mother, who had to stop her education in fifth grade to support her parents and put food on the table. Despite the many structural and racial-gender challenges she faced, she instilled in me the profound value of education from a young age. Additionally, I want to thank my father, who taught me the importance of discipline and hard work without losing my smile, and my siblings for all their support, love, and care.

I am grateful to my U.S. mothers, Leigh Fletcher and Amy Dempsey, who welcomed me into their homes without me speaking a word of English. They patiently helped me learn English and always treated me like their daughter and best friend. Without their support and motivation, I would not be here today. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my U.S. sister, Katie Fletcher, for teaching me English since she was six years old. Instead of me reading to her during her bedtime, she was the one reading her children's books to me so that I could learn how to pronounce the words in English. I love you three so much! I appreciate your belief in me, your unwavering support as my biggest cheerleaders, and for being my family here in the U.S.

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Dr. Vanover, thank you for being a great mentor to me. You have gone out of your way many times to check on my well-being and made sure that I was taking care of myself during this journey. It was an honor to be your student and to work with you. Keep inspiring your students through the arts, qualitative research, and kindness. Dr. Cobb-Roberts, your multicultural education classes, mentorship, and support were invaluable during my journey. I cannot express enough how much you have inspired and motivated me. Dr. Braunstein, thank you for being an inspiration to me. I remember walking with you on campus, and you shared your work about multilingual education. That moment made me realize your passion and the depth of your commitment to your students. Thank you for your ongoing guidance and mentorship.

I acknowledge Cyber Florida for all their support during this journey. Since my second semester in my Ph.D. program, they have accepted me as their graduate assistant student. I could not have achieved this dream without their support and motivation. Ernie Farraresso, thank you

for your mentorship and for always being there advocating for me. Thank you for teaching me to be a great, humble, and caring leader. Shannon Ward, Evelyn Curry, Dr. Gina Nelson, and Dana Barnes, thank you for everything you have done for me. I am thankful for having Cyber Florida's team as part of my chosen family. Because of you all, I will be able to see my family again after seven years away from home.

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I want to acknowledge my U.S. and international virtual writing groups. I could not have done this without your daily motivation. The Ph.D. process is a lonely journey, but you were there daily with me, virtually supporting me. I remember spending days and nights together writing via Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests. Some of you were in Europe, Canada, South Africa, India, England, and different parts of the U.S. Despite the distance and never having the opportunity to meet you in person, you made a difference during this process, and you all inspire me.

I also want to thank Dr. Gita Jaffe for your friendship, care, mentorship, and the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice family. This organization has such a special place in my heart. You had a significant impact on me, my scholarly work, and the connection I make with mental health and immigrant families' well-being. I am also thankful to the Curriculum & Pedagogy (C&P) Group for teaching, inspiring, and mentoring me. I also want to thank the Outcast Theatre Collective group for supporting me at the beginning of this dissertation and for trying to help me connect with schools and families.

Lastly, I am grateful to Mother Nature, an embodiment of divinity that transcends Western religious boundaries and beliefs, for providing me with internal motivation for writing this dissertation. During my solo hikes and moments of contemplation and meditation, surrounded by solitude and the beauty of nature, the seeds of this work were planted and developed within myself. Thank you!

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ABSTRACT

Anti-immigrant sentiment and "English-only" ideologies have a significant impact on educational policies, practices, and processes. This includes parental engagement, the quality of education and life opportunities offered to immigrant children, and families' well-being. The purpose of this study was to examine how Latinx and Caribbean mothers in Florida with various immigration statuses (i.e., undocumented, asylum seekers, refugees, international students, and mixed-status) and often with limited financial resources attempt to steward their children through the U.S. educational system. The research question was: How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida? The sub-question was: How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?

The conceptual framework guiding this study was Community Cultural Wealth, coupled with Critical Language and Race Theory (LangCrit), Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit), and Borderlands Theory. Through a qualitative community-based digital approach, in-depth interviews, and artwork (e.g., painting, photography, poetry, collage), two findings emerged from the collected data. They were: (1) Mothers experienced interactions with school personnel and curriculum practices that normalize a culture of exclusion and microaggressions toward immigrant children and families of linguistic and ethnic-racial diversity. (2) Discontinuous and superficial communication from school personnel influenced mothers' dis/engagement, mobility, and school choice. The findings of this study are discussed along with implications for policies on the mental health of children and families, professional development for teachers, school

leadership, and the role of inclusive technology in enhancing school communication and parental engagement. Recommendations for theoretical development and future research are provided.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

It was a Thursday morning in 2016, the election year of the 45th U.S. President, Donald K. Trump, a republican with an anti-immigration campaign. I was assigned to be a substitute teacher in a public high school in a rural area in southwest Florida, where most of the students were Latinx and Black from limited financial backgrounds. My task was to help Hispanic high school emergent multilingual immigrant students conclude their British literature reading assignment and prepare them to take their English reading test the following week.

First, I attempted to read their bodies and facial expressions because when you are an emergent multilingual learner who moved from another country without speaking the standard language of your new "home,'' you become very sensitive to people's body language and expressions. This predisposition is a form of survival mode that we transnational emergent multilingual learners develop until we understand and communicate with others who do not speak our native language. Therefore, I was trying to interpret the students' body language and understand what they implicitly wanted to tell me.

Out of curiosity, I decided to open the book after observing their body language. As an emergent multilingual learner with a master's degree from a U.S. university, I could not understand what I was reading in their assigned British book. I was questioning, "How can schools and educators require students who are illiterate in English to read this old-school formal English book? What is the purpose of giving emergent multilingual students a reading assignment in a language style they do not use daily? Why don't schools use students' cultural

and linguistic capital to help them learn English and value their funds of knowledge?" My curiosity prompted me to explore Florida's public schools' mandated curriculum, policies, standardized tests, multicultural training, and educational practices. I kept watching the students, and I could feel their lack of self-esteem and embarrassment for being in high school and not being fully literate in standard English. I also recognized their determination to learn so they could succeed and pass their coming test.

Trying to find a solution and help the students, I asked them to sit in a circle with me like my Indigenous descendant grandmother used to do with me in Brazil. I shared my story as a Brazilian emergent multilingual woman of color who migrated to the U.S. as a monolingual Portuguese-speaker young adult who struggled to learn English in my first four years living in the U.S. I sat down with those students. I said

> we are going to read this book together. We will do just as I did to myself for the past years, and that is how I learned how to read in English to thrive in school. We will read aloud, and even though we will not understand all the words, we will understand the general context of the reading. In addition, your home language will help you to learn English. My Portuguese helped me succeed in school, and your Spanish will also help you succeed so that you can achieve your dreams.

I assigned each student to read a paragraph of the book. They were embarrassed, and one of them told me in Spanish: "*Teacher, soy un refugiado y recién llegué hace tres meses. Yo no quero ler. Yo no se ler em ingles."* I replied using translanguaging, "Do not worry, we will read this together, and nobody is here to judge you. We are learning with you, and we are here together to support each other. We can translate the words that you do not know to Spanish.'' I remember his voice and fear while reading the first paragraph.

On his second turn, he read with more confidence. On his third turn, he read without fear of being bullied and teased about his accent and pronunciation. The students' posture, tone of voice, and body expression changed, and several came to me and asked, "*Maestra, ¿qué hiciste para aprender inglés? Yo quiero aprender, pero a menudo veo a la gente en mi escuela juzgándome por mi accent y español?"* Their smiles are in my memory. That was the day I discovered my dissertation theme. I learned that a simple act of *carinho* (kindness, affection) and accepting students' funds of knowledge and language background could encourage emergent multilingual students to learn and thrive despite linguistic, immigration status, racial-ethnic, and socioeconomic obstacles. There is a significant power in listening to the students' and parents' *testimônios* as a tool for social justice. Their voices can guide educational leaders, policymakers, and educators to make proper changes in legislation and teaching practices to attend to emergent multilingual students' and families' needs and help them feel welcomed in the classroom despite all the linguistic and anti-immigration policies in the U.S. that value "English-only" practices. There is a need to listen to the stories and experiences of immigrant children and parents in schools (Soto & Garza, 2011).

Context: Who are Emergent Multilingual Students and Parents?

Emergent multilingual students and parents are persons who were not born in the U.S. or U.S. citizens whose native language is a language other than English. Emergent multilingual can also be an individual whose home language is not English, such as Native Americans or those "who come from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency; and individuals who, by reason thereof, have sufficient difficulty listening, speaking, reading, or writing where the language of instruction is English" (HCPS, 2019, p. 5).

According to the Department of Education, there are nearly 5 million emergent multilingual students officially enrolled in U.S. public schools, and Florida is one of the top states in the U.S. with the highest number of emergent multilingual students, totalizing 265,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022; Florida Department of Education, 2023). According to data released by the Migration Institute Policy (2018), the most spoken languages in Florida are as follows in Figure 1.

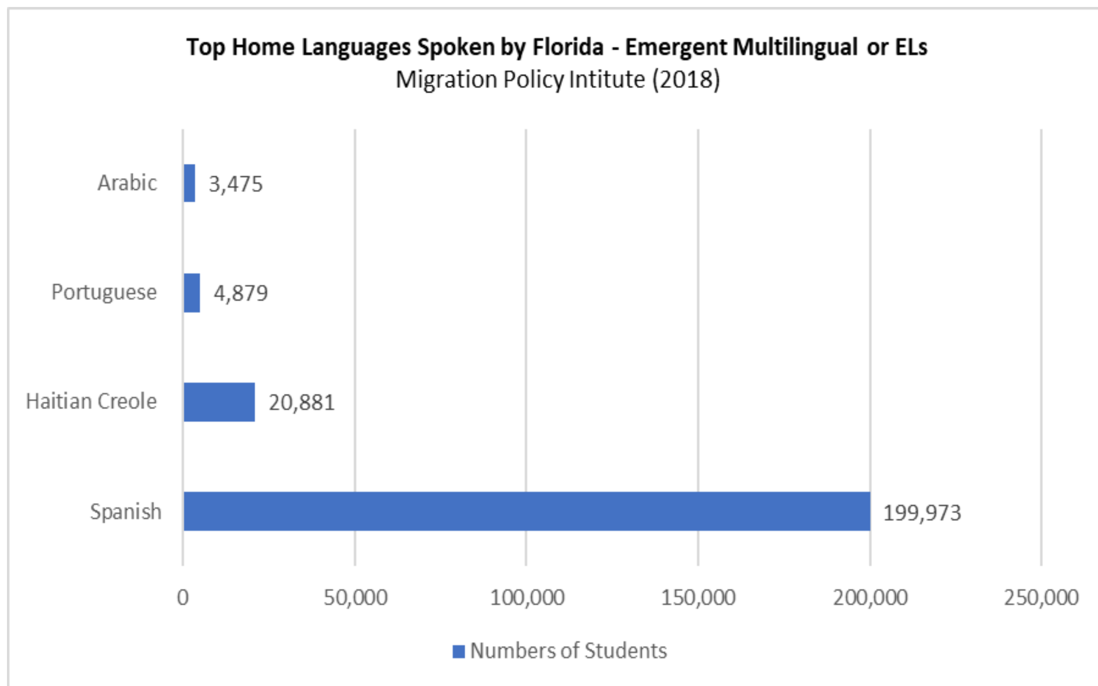

Figure 1: *Top Home Languages Spoken in Florida*

In the past two decades, the number of emergent multilingual students living in the United States increased by 28.1% (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). Studies show that by 2060, the country will become a majority-minority nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), where one in four U.S. residents will speak a language other than English. In addition, studies reveal that from 1980 to 2018, the number of foreign speakers doubled (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019), and 41% of immigrants described themselves as having below basic English literacy (Richwine, 2017). For those reasons, it is essential to understand the challenges emergent

multilingual pupils and families face in K-12 public schools and the changes needed in educational policies and services available to better attend to this community's needs.

Problem Statement

A significant body of studies (Hulse, 2021; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Noguera et al., 2015) shows that underperformance, tracking, grade retention, low graduation, high suspension rates, and overrepresentation of emergent multilingual students of color in special education in the U.S. are problems that persist in before and after *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). This policy requires that all students enrolled in public schools (urban, suburban, and rural) meet the standard proficiency in math and reading through English standardized testing, despite students' linguistic barriers causing several forms of stress and pressure on emergent multilingual students and families from limited financial background who do not have the proper structural and socioemotional support, but also in teachers and school leaders. NCLB increased the academic standards and school accountability and disregarded the linguistic and socioeconomic conditions of emergent multilingual students, contributing to the low academic achievement and stigmatization of emergent multilingual students of color, impacting their learning process, life opportunities, and outcomes.

In 2015, the U.S. government signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),* which requires educational agencies to obtain educational funding to improve the educational system to help emergent multilingual students better. However, studies show that emergent multilingual students often attend schools located in disadvantaged and segregated areas with little funding, schools lacking a positive environment, poor quality education, lack of trained teachers, a flawed curriculum that deny students access to diverse types of essential support, and educational programs that can contribute to student's development such as arts, music, ethnic studies, and

other specific college preparatory courses. Furthermore, students live in an educational system that enforces “English-only’’ policies and programs that deny the languages, life experiences, and funds of knowledge of emergent multilingual students and families, contributing to discouragement and low academic performance. Instead of connecting teachers, students, and families, those policies create a gap between educators, pupils, and families.

Ayscue & Orfield (2015) state that stigmas and low expectations of emergent multilingual students can cause several long-term effects such as drop-out school, early pregnancy, incarceration, poverty, obesity, housing and food instability, mental health conditions (i.e., anxiety, depression, internalized racism, emotional traumas), and unemployment. Cabrera et al. (2021) conducted a study with 12 596 Latinx parents. The findings revealed that “English-only’’ policies marginalize immigrant parents who do not speak English and make them doubt themselves and their role as a parent, influencing their psychosocial well-being, changing family dynamics, and generating shame and detachment between child/youth and parent.

The results of all those studies suggest that children's and parents' experiences are rarely heard and incorporated into educational policies and practices, especially when students and families are transnational and not fully fluent in English (Soto & Garza, 2011). Furthermore, studies highlight how families’ lived experiences can contribute to new perspectives for developing more effective educational practices and policies to help students succeed in K-12 public schools while helping immigrant parents engage more in their children/youth schools. Shim and Shur (2018) highlight that listening to students' and families’ experiences can positively contribute to students' development. It can help teacher, student, and parent relationships progress. It can also assist students and parents in feeling that their voice and

personal experiences matter, contributing to their self-esteem, sense of belonging, and ownership/leadership learning skills.

There is a need to include the families' voices in "practicing of teaching and learning, and in research in a way that allows students to tell their own stories rather than simply being a recipient of the knowledge being delivered by teachers" (Shim & Shur, 2018, p. 22). Cioè-Peña (2018), Monzó (2013), and Barkhuizen (1998) highlight that everyday teachers and school leaders make decisions about language teaching and practices, but emergent multilingual immigrant students' and parents' perspectives are hardly heard.

Using Language as a Political Act: Translanguaging & Funds of Knowledge

The term translanguaging was first used by Williams (1994) to refer to educational practices where teachers intentionally welcome and use the students' and parents' native language to help their emergent multilingual pupils learn a new language while embracing students' funds of knowledge (cultural background and life experiences). Wei (2011) explains that translanguaging is a practice where multilingual learners can bring to school "their personal history, experiences, environment, their attitude, belief, and ideology" (p. 1223) without judgments. The classroom becomes a place where students can feel safe to share their language and stories. Translanguaging is a transformative pedagogical approach because it embraces students' and families' language and ethnic practices in the classroom and the individual forms that students see and perceive in the world they live in.

According to Baker and Wright (2006), translanguaging has four pedagogical advantages: (1) It helps the student understand the content approached in the classroom. (2) Helps pupils to develop their less fluent language. (3) Help students have home-school cooperation where parent and child can communicate in their home language without impacting

their child-parent relationship. Furthermore, translanguaging can help non-English-speaking parents support their children despite their English language barriers. (4) Helps fluent English speakers to interact and communicate with emergent multilingual students in U.S. schools.

Translanguaging is not merely a pedagogical approach, but it is also a political act and a form of activist-oriented use of language to show resistance to the repression experienced by language-minoritized communities (Flores, 2014). It is not code-switching, even though they are similar practices, "code-switching presupposes the existence of discrete languages which are, in fact, socio-historical constructions that have been used to marginalize bilingual practices that do not fit neatly into these discrete languages" (Flores, 2014, np.). Translanguaging differs from bilingualism (Flores & Bale, 2016). Bilingualism values the idea of a *monoglossic language ideology,* which means that bilingualism values double monolingualism as it idealizes and puts two languages into separate boxes as a static process instead of interconnecting them as fluid and dynamic practice (Garcia, 2009). Thus, bilingualism still marginalizes language-minoritized communities and values colonial frameworks (Flores & Bales, 2016). Therefore, translanguaging is a practice common in ethnic racialized communities as a form of resistance.

There are many misunderstandings about translanguaging, and sometimes it is incorrectly mixed with other forms of using languages, such as metrolingualism, polylingualism, bilingualism, and code-switching (Kleyn & Garcia, 2019). Despite the significant growth in studies about translanguaging, there is a need for more research that analyzes translanguaging as a political act (Flores, 2014) and as a form of "break down nation-state-imposed hierarchies around named languages that reproduces inequalities'' (Kleyn & Garcia, 2019, p. 75). Relevant linguistic terminology is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: *Understanding Linguistic Terminology about the Use of Language*

Terminology	Meaning	Literature
Metrolingualism	It is a form of celebrating diversity in language. It is the use of two languages in the same conversation or text. **Example:** I am a boa *estudante* = I am a good student = There is a mix of Portuguese and English in the same sentence without impacting the communication.	Otsuji & Pennycook, (2010)
Polylingualism	It is the integration of several types of linguistic practices.	Jørgensen (2008)
Code-switching	A practice used by emergent multilingual who switch languages in a conversation.	Auer (1998) & MacSwan (2014)
Bilingualism or static monolingualism	Value two languages, but as a static process.	Fishman (1972) Flores & Bale (2016)
Translanguaging or Dynamic Multilingualism	Dynamic bilingualism A form of political act Fluid. They are not separated from the individual.	García & Wei (2014) Garcia (2009) Flores & Bale (2016) Hornberger and Link (2012) Garcıa & Kliefgen (2010)

Moll et al. (1992) explain that funds of knowledge of a student are essential in teaching practices, and there is an essential connection between "student's world, theirs and their family's fund of knowledge, and the classroom experience" (p.137), and the exchange between family and school matter and can help the academic success and the well-being of emergent multilingual students. Funds of knowledge avoid standard rules shared by a social group that

dictate how they should act, speak, and behave. The funds of knowledge derive from students' and families' lived experiences through language and daily practices (Gonzáles, 2005).

Students' and families' voices are vital to examining educational practices and policies, what needs to change, and how it impacts pupils and their families. Translanguaging and funds of knowledge are the bridges between teachers, pupils, parents, and communities. However, to have this practice effective in schools, educators, school leaders, and school districts need to recognize and value the voices and stories of emergent multilingual students and families. Research seldom analyzes how emergent multilingual students and families use literacy and their funds of knowledge to create meaning in their lives and how they interact with others (de la Piedra, 2010; Linares, 2020), and a few of them highlight students' voices in the classroom (Canagarajah, 1993). A significant number of studies analyze their speaking practices. However, a lack of research analyzes how their writing connects to students' language, ethnicity, immigration status, class, gender, and other social identities.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the experiences of emergent multilingual Latinx and Caribbean immigrant mothers raising children enrolled in K-12 public schools in Florida. In this inquiry, I listened to mothers' experiences in their children's schools and how schools communicated with families who were not fully literate in English based on U.S. standard approaches. Additionally, this study examined the impact of school policies, practices, and processes on family engagement, well-being, and student success.

The purpose of this study was to examine how mothers in Florida with various levels of English proficiency, immigration statuses (i.e., undocumented, asylum seekers, refugees,

international students, and mixed migration status), and limited financial resources, attempt to steward their children through the U.S. educational system.

Research Questions

The research question guiding this study was *How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida?* The sub-question was *How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?*

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in Critical Theory, the theoretical models informing my work are Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Alemán, 2009), and its genealogical branches (LatCrit, LangCrit, and DisCrit), and Borderlands Theory (Anzaldúa, 1987) rooted in Chicanx queer feminist studies. Integrating those three theoretical frameworks is essential in my research to examine the perspectives of emergent multilingual immigrant Latinx and Caribbean women who have children/youth attending public schools in Florida. This approach sheds light on how social change can transform oppressive systems.

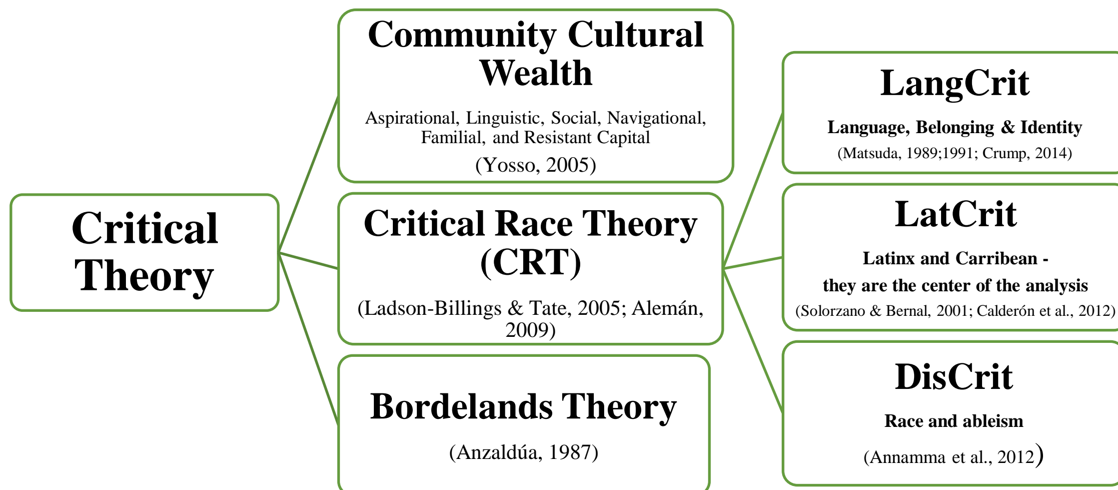

Figure 2: *Theoretical Frameworks*

Community Cultural Wealth

Using the CRT lens, Yosso (2005) introduces the term community cultural wealth as a form of challenge to the idea of cultural capital in Bourdieu et al. (1977). According to Bourdieu and Passeron, “cultural capital is the contribution made by the educational system [and family socialization] to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes, by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of distribution of cultural capital among these classes" (p. 487). However, Lamont and Laureau (1988) explain that cultural capital is identified as the epistemologies and form of knowledge of cultures that value educational attainment, a Westernized curriculum rooted in the elite cultures where children from middle and high-class “enter school with their social and cultural cues while working-class and lower-class students must acquire the knowledge and skills to negotiate their educational experience after they enter school’’ (p. 155). The Bordieuan concept of cultural capital can explain the social stratification in the U.S. educational system, where the knowledge of high-class communities is valued. In contrast, the epistemologies (a form of communication, body expressions, accent, cultural traditions, and diverse forms of pop art) of low socioeconomic communities of color are undervalued and unrecognized in school. Yosso (2005) explains that “cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (p.76). In other words, cultural capital is not just inherited or possessed by the middle class. However, instead, it refers to accumulating specific forms of knowledge, skills, and abilities valued by privileged communities (Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005) clarifies that community cultural wealth values the epistemologies and funds of knowledge of Communities of Color across six forms of capital that are fluid, interconnected, and constitute community cultural wealth. They are (1) *Aspirational capital*:

Resilience and self-motivation to keep students' dreams despite political and socioeconomic barriers. (2) *Navigational capital*: It is a strategy created by Communities of Color and other minoritized groups to navigate a system created without them in mind. (3) *Social capital*: It is a networking group of individuals that support others to navigate those social systems in society. (4) *Linguistic capital*: The use of community language to communicate experiences, skills, and epistemologies. "Linguistic capital reflects the idea that Students of Color arrive at school with multiple languages and communication skills" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). However, this communication is through languages and different art forms such as poetry, dance, hip-hop, painting, and other forms of artistic knowledge. (5) *Familial capital:* Knowledge inherited from *família* (kin) and their ancestor passed through the years. (6) *Resistant capital:* The knowledge goes against the status quo. Yosso explains that community cultural wealth is an asset that Communities of Color have, and it is a form of resistance and a way to preserve their funds of knowledge, family, and community traditions hereditary from past generations.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a theoretical framework from critical legal studies in the 1970s. CRT analyzes the relationship among race, racism, and power relations and how racial intolerance impacts the experiences of People of Color and other "racially disenfranchised communities" (Alemán, 2009, p. 304). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state that through this framework, we can understand the persistent issues related to racism in schooling, how it impacts the experiences of People of Color and other historically underrepresented and minoritized communities, and how listening to their counternarratives can contribute to social changes and rethink educational policies, practices, and processes.

One of the CRT tenets is counternarrative. Storytelling and *testimônios* allow racially disenfranchised communities to share their stories as a form of resistance and a way to challenge the status quo and deficits narratives and beliefs (white, patriarchal, Christian, nativist, monolingual). Delgado and Stedancic (2017) state

> Stories also serve a powerful additional function for minority communities. Many victims of racial discrimination suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament. Others pretend that it didn't happen or that they "just let it roll off my back.''… Stories can give them a voice and reveal that other people have similar experiences. Stories can name a type of discrimination (e.g., microaggressions, unconscious discrimination, or structural racism); once named, it can be combated. If race is not real or objective but constructed, racism and prejudice should be capable of deconstruction; the pernicious beliefs and categories are, after all, our own. Powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity (p.45)

Yosso (2005) explains that CRT was created based on the lack of a framework that openly values the stories and lived experiences of Communities of Color through storytelling, *testimônios*, and other forms of narratives every so often disregarded by white Eurocentric standards. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) state that "storytelling has been a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression the 'voice' component of Critical Race Theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first on the road to social justice" (p. 58) and sharing those stories lived by People of Color are necessary to show the types of structural racism, microaggressions, and oppressions lived by students and families in school settings and influenced by "English-only" policies and educational practices. Ladson-Billings

and Tate (1995) state that "without authentic voices of People of Color (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members), it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities'' (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p.58).

Besides counterstorytelling, CRT scholars concentrate their analysis on intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989, 1993) explains that the intersectionality lens analyzes power relations, the system of oppression and discrimination, and how it intersects with race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, immigration status, sexuality, class, culture, language, phenotype, disabilities, and other identities. For example, transnational emergent multilingual students are racialized bodies in the U.S. by their language and the intersection of their ethnicity, nationality, race, immigration status, class, gender, disability, sexuality, and phenotype. Collins (2017) highlights that subordinated groups are excluded by formal governmental policies and practices and silenced without having the right to speak up and share their voices because of their race and the intersection of their gender, ethnicity, class, and other identities.

Alemán (2009) states that CRT lenses in education are fundamental because they can influence how public policies influence the experiences of racially disenfranchised communities and "by exposing these internalized discourses, CRT can also then disrupt the status quo, center discussions of race and racism, and interrogate concepts such as 'respect' and 'decorum' in the politics of education, concepts that silence the experiences of students and Communities of Color" (Alemán, 2009, p.304). Furthermore, CRT in education is dedicated to fighting for social justice, eradicating several forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, and poverty, and empowering underrepresented communities such as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asians, Muslins, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and other communities oppressed by the white Christian supremacy capitalist patriarchy ideologies (hooks, 1994).

This study will focus my analysis on three fields linked to Critical Race Theory: Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit), Language Critical Race Theory (LangCrit), and Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit). I claim that although CRT is a vital framework, it does not address specific issues faced by the Latinx and Caribbean transnational emergent multilingual students and how race, ethnicity, disabilities, immigration status, class, and language intersect and influence the experiences of transnational emergent multilingual students.

Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). LatCrit is an extension of CRT concerned particularly with the oppression lived by the Latinx community due to their language, accent, immigration status, citizenship, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, class, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, It is a theory of transformative resistance (internal and external) motivated by social justice. Solorzano & Bernal (2001) state that through LatCrit, we place the stories and lived experiences of Latinx communities as

> the center of analysis and demonstrate how they engage in internal and external forms of transformational resistance. Drawing from the experiential knowledge of Students of Color allows educators and community workers to identify, acknowledge, and view as strengths the transformational resistance strategies that students use to navigate through the university and the community. Indeed, we need to listen more closely and more often to the voices and experiences of resistance as we also develop critical educational studies and related stories from a strength-or asset-based perspective… LatCrit framework challenges the ideology of a 'race- and gender-neutral curriculum,' 'objective, standardized testing,' 'meritocratic tracking systems,' and other 'color- and gender-blind educational policies' that Students of Color regularly encounter and often combat through internal and external transformative strategies (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, pp. 335–336).

Through LatCrit lenses, this dissertation uses counternarrative*s* (Calderón et al., 2012) as a framework and methodology to listen to the experiences (Huber, 2011) of Latinx and Caribbean emergent multilingual students and families of color from low socioeconomic status and how their identities in schools influence their experiences, emotions, well-being, and life opportunities. In this study, LatCrit is important because it also deconstructs the Latinx and Caribbean identities and values their diversity. Hernández-Truyol et al. (2006) state that LatCrit exposes

> the fallacy of the 'essentialized' Latina/o employed in mainstream venues to make law and policy regarding 'Latinas/os.' These investigations demonstrated and documented key demographic facts, including that not all Latinas and Latinos are Hispanic; that not all Latinas and Latinos are Roman Catholic; that not all Latinas/os speak Spanish, or want to; and that not all Latinas/o live in the United States due to immigration (p. 188)

LatCrit framework shows the complexity of what it means to be a Latinx and how it is connected to

> race and ethnicity, religion, culture, imperialism and colonialism, language and its suppression, class, and immigration status. These investigations, in short, de-centered uncritical assumption that all Latinas/os fit predominant stereotypes, assumptions that skew law and policy to the detriment of multiply diverse Latina/o communities (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006, p.189).

Critical Language and Race Theory (LangCrit). Critical Language and Race Theory (LangCrit) is a term introduced by Crump (2014) that examines mainly how "race, racism, and racialization intersect with issues of language, belonging, and identity" (p. 207). Morita-Mullaney (2018) explains that LangCrit is a hybrid framework that connects CRT with critical

language studies (CLS) and analyzes “how language and race are imposed, assumed or negotiated, which include colorblindness, color muteness, and nativism” (p. 375). In LangCrit, language is used strategically to sustain inadequate power relations and create a colorblindness society that ignores race and its connection with language. Morita-Mullaney cites as an example emergent multilingual students who are often labeled in schools as “struggling students’’ due to their English proficiency, and where those pupils are stereotyped by their language but not by their other identities and skills. Furthermore, LangCrit is a vital framework for analyzing how emergent multilingual people from diverse cultural and ethnic-racial backgrounds are treated in educational institutions and by their leadership. Pollock (2004) states

> Labeling (or not labeling) each other with race words is, of course, just one everyday way that Americans make each other racial—and make race matter. Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have studied many other ways we reproduce “racial” differences through our everyday talk, such as through the patterned use of particular languages, dialects, styles, or vocabulary (p.5).

Influenced by Barth (1969) and other anthropological work, Pollock uses race and language to explain how racialized languages of ethnic communities are perceived and stereotyped in schools and how they impact students’ academic achievement, discipline, and life opportunities. Acknowledging students’ race, ethnicity, and language is significant in education and can be a practical resource in schools. Alim (2016) uses the term *transracialization* to explain how the “same body is raced and re-raced,” often, this re-racialization happens through language. Furthermore, numerous students who live at this intersection of race, ethnicity, and language use “language to negotiate identity and resist ascription totalizing phenotype-racial categories’’(Alim, 2016, p. 45). As an example, in some situations, an Afro-Latinx/Caribbean

student can be recognized as a Black American adolescent in the U.S. by their phenotype; however, those same student uses their native language to show their identity and as a form of fight back and deconstruct labels and categorizations of what means to be a Latinx or a Caribbean emergent multilingual student of color in the U.S. In other cases, students are stigmatized by their language and through the intersection of race, ethnicity, language, and citizenship. All those identities matter, especially in educational policies and practices (Alim, 2016). For that reason, those intersectional identities need to be acknowledged interchangeably.

Matsuda (1991) analyzes how language, speech, and accent are a form of power distribution where those who do not speak the white standard English are considered inferior, lazy, stupid, uneducated, and outsiders. A standard accent is seen as a national, superior, more valuable, universal, efficient, and unifying symbol. Through language and accent (not talking the "proper" way), racialized individuals and communities have been denied access to education, housing, jobs, and other opportunities for advancement. The lack of assimilation to a "proper" language

> may determine life or death, freedom or jail, protection or neglect. The ideological dimension of accent discrimination is the creation and maintenance of a belief system that sees some as worthy and others as unworthy based on accent, such as disparities in wealth and power are neutralized (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1399).

Matsuda (1991) highlights that the accent and language of an individual carry

> the story of who you are – who first held you and talked to you when you were a child, where you lived, your age, the schools you attended, the language you know, your ethnicity, whom you admire, your loyalties, your profession, your class positions: traces of your life and identity are woven into your accent. Someone who tells you they don't

> like the way you speak is quiet likely telling you that they don't like you (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1329).

When the U.S. educational system imposes "English-only" policies and practices through curriculum, educational programs, and standardized testing on emergent multilingual students and enforces assimilation, it forces students from diverse cultural backgrounds and often racialized to forget their identities and language to embrace the traditional American culture.

Dis/ability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit). Grounded in Disability Studies (DS) and Black feminism, DisCrit examines how race and dis/ability intersect and are interdependent, shaping the experiences of people of color in education settings and society. Coined by Annamma et al. (2013), DisCrit is a framework that

> theorizes about the ways in which race, racism, dis/ability and ableism are built into the interactions, procedures, discourses, and institutions of education, which affect students of color with dis/abilities qualitatively differently than white students with dis/abilities (p. 7)

In contrast to "White Disability Studies" (Bell, 2006), DisCrit theory acknowledges the unique and intersectional experiences of communities of color diagnosed with dis/abilities. A further purpose of DisCrit is to deconstruct White supremacy and scientific racism founded on eugenic beliefs that attempted to align ability with racial classification (Du Bois, 1920). Discriminatory beliefs toward Black and Brown bodies, such as "less capable" or "less intelligent" than those who are White individuals, remain prevalent in schools today, but in covert ways, perpetuating diverse forms of social and educational inequality, exclusion, segregation, harassment, and exploitation of dis/abled people.

Many studies grounded in DisCrit have examined the short- and long-term effects of deficit framing on students of color labeled with dis/abilities in the U.S. educational system. For example, ethnic-racial and linguistically diverse students of color are more likely to be diagnosed with Speech or Language Impairment (SLI), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Intelectual Disability (ID), Emotional Disturbances (ED), or Behavior Disorders due to historical and systemic discrimination, and school's personnel biases (Harry and Klingner 2006; Losen & Orfield 2002). According to Annamma et al. (2019), "race and perceived ability (or lack thereof) are still connected" (p.3), leading to the overrepresentation of students of color in special education. This overrepresentation can limit students' access to equitable education, affect their development, and restrict their life opportunities.

Connor et al. (2019) and Fuller Shaw (2011) highlight that the overrepresentation of students of color in special education has caused significant problems for children and families, such as limited opportunities, employment, incarceration, dropout, poverty, and homelessness. Focusing on emergent multilingual students, Hulse (2021) highlights that deficit framing discourses and educators' biases and misjudgments "lead teachers and evaluators to interpret a student's slow progress as a resulting from an innate disability rather than conditions in the classroom" (p.384). As a result of biases and misdiagnoses based on judgment rather than facts, teachers fail to recognize students needing additional support. Therefore, their prejudices determine what services students will receive and where they will be placed. Because of this, DisCrit theorists aim to deconstruct White supremacist beliefs about dis/ability and to analyze the impact of these deficit judgments and discrimination on students, communities, and families.

Borderlands Theory

The Borderlands Theory framework analyzes how constructing "the border" is a form of social power that can create several social divisions. The border is physical and "territorial, political, jurisdictional" (Nail, 2016, p.1). However, Linares (2020) explains that international borders can also be imagined, and "they carry with them a linguistic and cultural knowledge that they strategically use to navigate new and shifting cultural and linguistic landscapes" (Linares, 2020, p. 4) often disregarded in educational settings. According to the queer feminist Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa (1987),

> gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens – whether they possess documents or not, whether they're Chicanos, Indians, or Blacks. Do not enter, trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, the whites, and those who align themselves with whites (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 25-26).

Nevertheless, there is a connection between Borderlands Theory and the experiences of K-12 emergent multilingual immigrant students and families. Citing Anzaldúa (1987), Bejarano (2015) explains that it is essential that educators, school leaders, and policymakers become more conscious about the borderlands.

> [The] borderlands can offer new insights for transforming educational settings, affirming students and their communities, and promoting a political context that acknowledges the strength of those navigating multiple borders. If crossing is a way of life for *transfronteriza/os*, what does research reveal about children's educational experiences and young adults who traverse across borders every day? (Bejarano, 2015, p. 111-112)

Borderlands Theory thinking provides the possibility of understanding the experiences and struggles lived by immigrant emergent multilingual students and parents who cross not only the physical border (U.S./Mexico border) but also those who crossed other forms of borders in the past. Some still cross multiple borders daily (imaginary, physical, and linguistic) while leaving their home, community, and home language to attend a K-12 school with "English-only" policies and practices. Furthermore, Borderlands theory also opens a space to recognize, analyze, and understand the stories of emergent multilingual immigrant students and families facing several systemic challenges. These challenges are related to language, race, ethnicity, phenotype, and culture but also immigration status and other intellectual and physical stresses (Mignolo, 2000). Only immigrants and emergent multilingual from low socioeconomic backgrounds and from Global South countries experience and understand those challenges because they migrated to a "homeland that does not want them; many find a welcome hand holding out only suffering, pain, and ignoble death" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.34).

Stereotypes about immigrant students and parents (those who crossed borders) can impact their experiences in schools in negative ways due to the anti-immigration stereotypes released by the mass media, U.S. culture, politics, and other systems influencing how teachers, school leaders, government, and society perceive those students (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2017). The Borderlands theory offers new perspectives about students and the need to transform the educational system to properly attend to immigrant emergent multilingual students who often live in two or more worlds (linguistically, physically, and culturally). As a result, those students and their families live in several forms of personal and social conflicts because their social identities influence their academic success, emotions, mental health, self-esteem, and life opportunities. For that reason, understanding transnational crossings is vital for developing the

literacy capacities of the youth who will be the local-global future leaders. However, "dismantling *fronteras* is no easy task because there are strong forces and ideologies keeping people divided and political power in the hands of a privileged few and not with the marginalized 'others' such as migrant children, undocumented children, children who speak a language other than English, their parents, and their communities" (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2017, pp. 111-112).

Border thinking theorists argue that this framework can help teachers, researchers, school leaders, and policymakers to become more conscious about the experiences of immigrant emergent students, families, and communities. This framework can also encourage educators to become border crossers activists through the process of examining the language that they speak to refer to immigrant emergent multilingual students and their families, how they approach literacy pedagogies in the classroom, how teachers allow students to share their funds of knowledge (their culture, community traditions, language, and other epistemologies), and even how students use language to develop their identities. Becoming a crossroad (Anzaldúa,1987, p. 119) or a border pedagogue (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo; 2016; Garza, 2007; Giroux, 1988; 1992) is a form to help improve the educational system and programs such as bilingual and/or multilingual education and a way to support immigrant emergent multilingual students to succeed inside and outside of the classroom (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2017). As Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo (2016) explain, "border pedagogy privileges the epistemologies and ways of being in the world of those existing in the colonial borderlands – namely, the epistemologies of the South both within and outside the North" (p. 286). Through Borderlands theory and border pedagogy, educators, school leaders, and districts can help "reimagine and create spaces where critical hope can be cultivated beyond the dominant society's notion of individualism, a historical dreaming, competition, and high stakes accountability, and where both students and teachers learn from

each other less hierarchically to collectively act on their world'' (Cervantes-Soon & Carrillo, 2016, p.299).

Positionality: A Monolingual Latinx Immigrant Woman of Color in the U.S.

I am an Afro-Indigenous descendant Brazilian woman from a low-income background and a first-generation college student. I was born and raised in Brazil, and I migrated to the U.S. as an adult in my mid-twenties and as a monolingual Latinx with no English proficiency (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). I decided to leave my country, family, culture, and profession as a journalist to work as a babysitter in the U.S. My goal was to become fluent in English. While learning English and becoming a graduate student, my native language was vital to becoming multilingual. My linguistic background in Portuguese influenced how I read, write, and speak English. My native language helped me succeed as a Latinx trying to understand and navigate the U.S. culture as a student and professional. This is why this study focuses on language and mothers' experiences in their children's schools.

Having experienced translanguaging in schools, I believe this approach promotes inclusion and respect for linguistically and racial-ethnically diverse students and families. Moreover, it provides a tool to value the lives and cultural traditions of linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse families while motivating their engagement at school. Furthermore, translanguaging techniques can help emergent multilingual students and families develop their self-esteem, sense of belonging, well-being, and cognitive and socio-emotional skills.

Furthermore, during this journey as an immigrant and emergent multilingual, I heard from the U.S. immigration personnel that I was with excuses of studying despite being an honors student, a volunteer helping refugees to learn English during my free time, and a substitute teacher in the U.S. public schools. During my thirteen years in the U.S., I have tried to

deconstruct those deficit framing, stereotypes, and stigmas created by the U.S. media, culture, and politics about the immigrant Latinx and Caribbean communities. However, my racial and ethnic identities, phenotype, class, lack of English proficiency, and solid accent were always reasons for anti-migration, nativist, and raciolinguistic microaggressions and hypersexual jokes in public and private spaces - even more for being a Brazilian woman of color.

During my doctoral journey, I conducted a pilot study with six middle-school emergent multilingual immigrant students with limited financial resources. This experience showed that school leaders and teachers see their pupils daily. However, they do not know the trauma and daily struggles those students are going through in their homes and communities, influencing their social, cognitive, and emotional development. I wanted to conduct this study because it is necessary to listen to the stories of oppression lived by immigrant emergent multilingual children and families from the Global South and how language policies, leadership, and school practices influence their experiences in school, home, and community. Those empirical experiences in public schools and interactions with students, my positionality, immigration status, and life experience as a student and emerging scholar inspired me to conduct this study.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Key terms are defined as follows:

Emergent multilinguals are individuals who speak more than one language. It can be their second, third, or Lx language. I avoid using bilingual students or English Language Learners (ELL) because these terms contribute to deficit discourses and can limit the epistemological, dialectic, and other linguistic understandings of individuals and their communities. An emergent multilingual student in the U.S. K-12 public school can be a foreigner born, or a U.S.- citizen whose first language spoken at home is not English.

Funds of knowledge are “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households or individuals functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133).

Latina/Latino or Latinx are common terminologies used to refer to individuals who are Latin American descendants. For the purpose of inclusivity, this study will utilize the term *"Latinx"* throughout. This terminology deconstructs colonial, binary, and gendered labels and respects non-binary Latinx identities. Additionally, it is important to recognize that Spanish is not the only language spoken in Latin America. Other individuals who speak Portuguese, Indigenous, and Afro-Latinx languages are also prevalent in Latin America. Identifying these differences is essential when conducting research within the Latinx community to prevent stereotypes, exclusions, and the invisibility of Latin American and non-Spanish-speaking communities.

Haitians. Acknowledging and respecting the unique identity of people of Haitian descent residing in the U.S. and abroad is crucial. It is essential to understand that the Haitian community does not identify as African American, Black American, or Afro-Caribbean- even though Haiti is located in the Caribbean. Using these terms to refer to the Haitian community is incorrect and disrespectful. While some may use the term Creole, it is still possible for it to be misunderstood as Louisiana Creole. This French-based language originated during the slave trade and in the sugarcane plantations in the Mississippi Delta, located in the southwestern portion of Louisiana (U.S.). In light of this, it is critical to recognize and acknowledge the Haitian community as Haitians rather than Afro-Caribbean, Black, or Creoles. By doing so, we honor and respect their identities, history of resistance, struggle, and efforts to become the first nation to abolish slavery (1804) in the Western region. I discuss this issue in more detail during my self-reflection as a

researcher in Chapter 5. Children born in the U.S. to Haitian immigrant parents are called Haitian Americans. As a form of respect for the Latinx, Caribbean, and Haitian communities, it is also crucial to understand the distinctions between Haitian, Afro-Latinx, Afro-Caribbean, African-American, and Black American.

Caribbeans are individuals born in the Caribbean lands or of Caribbean descent living abroad.

Undocumented are foreign-born individuals and families who do not have official permission to remain in the country. It is important to avoid using terms such as "illegal immigrant" and "alien illegal immigrant," as they are offensive and discriminatory. A person cannot be classified as illegal; instead, their practice of remaining in the country without authorized permission is unconstitutional.

Unauthorized Immigrants. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), an unauthorized person refers to foreign-born individuals who are not lawful permanent residents or those who have expired authorized permission to remain in the country. Unauthorized immigrants sometimes enter the country on a visa but overstay without going through immigration.

Refugees are defined by the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as individuals and families who are eligible to receive protection "due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political union, is outside the country and is unable to, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of protection of that country" (IOM, 2023).

Asylum seekers are individuals who seek international protection from persecution, violence, lack of safety, and other forms of oppression and discrimination. It is important to note

that many individuals who seek asylum are not immediately granted refugee status and must undergo a rigorous migration process - particularly in the U.S. Furthermore, not all asylum seekers ultimately receive refugee status (IOM, 2023) making them vulnerable to violence, discrimination, detention, and deportation.

Unaccompanied or Separated refers to children and youth under 18 who have been separated from their parents or other family members. There are instances where a child arrives at the border of a foreign country alone without their parents or caretakers. Other times, their immigrant parents may have been deported or face criminal charges, leading to separation from their children.

International students are nonimmigrant individuals from foreign countries who have been granted a student visa (F1) for a limited period to study in the U.S. These visas are temporary and are subject to specific regulations, including a limit on the number of hours that international students are permitted to work on campus, which is 20 hours per week. As a result, international students are not permitted to work outside their educational institutions. International students who remain in school and follow immigration policies maintain their migratory status.

Immigrants in vulnerable situations cannot exercise their human rights due to anti-migration policies, practices, processes, and other systemic discrimination.

Mixed migration status refers to families with differing immigration statuses, which can impact their family dynamics and access to employment, housing, food, health care, and other public services and opportunities.

First-generation immigrants are those born in a different country and decided to migrate to another country. In the U.S. policies, this population is identified as foreign-born.

1.5 generation immigrants refer to children who were born in one country but migrated to another country at a young age with their parents.

Second-generation immigrants are those born in the country where their foreign-born parents migrated to, and they are citizens of their country of birth.

Children of immigrants are children under 18 with at least one immigrant parent who is 1.5, second, or third generation (Migration Policy Institute, 2021)

Borders are crossing points such as airports, land border crossing points (territory and maritime zones), ports, and points of entry between countries, embassies, and consulates. In Borderlands Theory studies, a border is not only geographical, but also political, cultural, linguistic, social, symbolic, and economical.

Emergent Multilingual Terminologies in U.S. Policies and Educational Practices

Webster and Lu (2012) systematically analyzed the published terminology about emergent multilingual students in the U.S., and their research findings show 14 different terms in policies and research. Webster and Lu explain that terminology is not neutral; instead, it is full of "values, assumptions, and attitudes" (Webster & Lu, 2012, p.84) that can promote inclusion or enhance disparities, power relations, and a hierarchy of superiority/inferiority based on the white Eurocentric-American standards. Umansky and Dumont (2021) state that those classifications are focused on the "debits (English proficiency) rather than assets'' (p. 1020), causing adverse outcomes on students, such as teachers' negative perceptions about emergent multilingual students.

Currently, the terminology often used in policies and educational practices is *English as a Second Language (ESL)* or *English Language Learner (ELL).* However, Garcia (2009) questions who is identified as an ESL/ELL student. A person who has an accent? When does a student stop

or remain a second-language learner? Garcia (2009) states that there is a need to stop restricting students and give "the term a full range of possibility and take away the negative connotations associated with being second, and not first" (Garcia, 2009, p. 81). Recent studies and school boards adopted emergent bilingual terminology to "refer to students whose home language is different from the school language and who have been identified as needing language support" (Catalano & Hamann, 2016, p. 265). However, Catalano et al. (2018) explain that the term emergent multilingual is more appropriate because "by adding multi to the term emergent bilinguals, we recognize the increasingly multilingual biographies of many students who come with standard and nonstandard varieties of their home languages or have studied other languages in school or fluidly move among different languages at home" (Catalano & Hamann, 2016, p. 265).

Furthermore, Catalano et al. (2018) question the use of metonymies such as ELL or ESL students. The scholars explain that acronyms can "erase the humanity of the students" (Catalano & Hamann, 2016, p. 13) and ignore the different identities and particularities of each student, putting all emergent multilingual students in a box full of stereotypes and labels and enforcing this idea that "one size fits all" which means that all emergent multilingual students learn in the same way. Furthermore, Nayar (1997) and Runcieman (2011) states that acronyms such as ELL highlight the idea of "us" versus "Other," and it is rooted in colonialist ideologies. For that reason, policymakers, teachers, school leaders, and researchers should be critical and aware of the consequences of accepting or using acronyms on students because those labels can also be full of "ideological and politico-economic agendas" (Runciman, 2011, p. 38). Therefore, I refuse to use acronyms such as ELL, EL, and/or ESL students in my study.

Past studies also show a conflict between *English language learners'* term*s* versus *Dual Language Learners* (DLLs). Lazarín and Park (2020) state that English language learners are used to emphasizing that the student needs only English language support. In contrast, dual language learners are a broader term that does not limit only English learners but also "children who are fully proficient in English but could benefit from home language support" (p. 2). Furthermore, the "majority of states currently lack policies to standardize or promote DLL identification in state preschool programs and other early childhood programs." (Lazarín & Park, 2021, p.2).

Another term used by border theorist researchers is *transnational emergent multilingual (TEM) border crossers youth*. The term *transnational emergent multilingual youth* is used by Hornberger (2007) to talk about immigrants that go through transnational processes (across national borders), which means they are, but not limited to, "immigrants or refugees recently arrived in the U.S. while in others they are more settled first - or second-generation immigrant or transnationally affiliated individuals" (Hornberger, 2007, p. 326). In my dissertation, I focus my analysis on transnational immigrant emergent multilingual mothers, students, and broader families. Fu & Graff (2009) explain that transnational emergent multilingual youth "are often caught in the crossroad of physical, mental, emotional, and cultural transformations as they traverse periods of disconnection, uncertainty, hope, and resilience" (p. 400). Linares (2020) explains that *transnational emergent multilingual border crossers* are "who move or have moved bodily across national borders while continuing to maintain affinity ties and social networks in more than one country." (p.2). Table 2 summarizes the terminology used in the U.S., its meanings, and connections to policies.

Table 2: *Overview of Emergent Multilingual Terminologies, Policies, and Meanings*

Terminology and Classification in the U.S.

1963

Terminology - Dual Language Learners

First Dual Language school in the U.S.: Miami, Florida - Dade County Public Schools - Coral Way Elementary School

Policies: *Sena v. Portales* federal court case - Implementation of bilingual and bicultural programs in Portales Municipal School District & Every Student Suceeds Act (2015)

Meaning: Children learn two or more languages simultaneously, and children who are learning their second language while also learning their first language. Children fluent in two or more language but still need language support. Young children who has at least one parent that speak a language other than English.

Literature: Lazarín and Park (2021), Baker & Wright (2006)

1965

Terminology - English Language Learner (ELL)

Policies: Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Every Student Succeed Act
ESEA went through several reauthorizations throughout the years (1978, 1994, 2001, and 2015)

Meaning: Term used to describe K-12 students who benefit from language program in the U.S. public schools. Past studies argue that ELL is not a neutral term. It emphansizes English as a mainstream language, and the native language of the student is seen as the "Other/outsider/inferior."

Literature: English (2009), Peregoy & Boyle (2008), Cummins (1986), Ontorio Ministry of Education (2005), Gutiérrez & Orellana (2006)

1968

Terminology - Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA)

Policy: Bilingual Education Act (Tittle VII)

Meaning: Negative meaning. Emphansize emergent multilingual student with limited capacity of learning. Terminology connect language with disability.

Literature: Webster & Lu (2012)

1974

Terminology - Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Policy: Lau v. Nichols (1974) policy.

Schools are required to provide proper and equal education to emergent multilingual students after almost 3,000 Chinese students who attended a public school in San Francisco (CA) without educational support to English learners.
The term LEP is still seen in public policies and governmental reports.

Meaning: The term still emphasize the idea that emergent multilingual students have limited capability to learn, underachievers, and abnormal. Accentuates the idea of English language learners as "Others." Term "reify White, monolingual, U.S.-born students as the norm'' (Shapiro, 2014, p. 387).

Literature: Shapiro (2004), National Council of Teachers of English (2008)

Table 2: *(Continued)*

2001 **Meaning:** Ignore the other languages, dialectics, and culture of students. Limit the capability and knowledge of non-English speakers. Emphasize the idea of being second and not first. Ignore students past experiences in different languages and funds of knowledge.

Literature: Webster & Lu (2012), Garcia (2009)

Terminology - Emergent Bilingual

2009 **Meaning:** It still can be problematic. It still limits students' past knowledge when using the bilingual.

Literature: Garcia (2009), Catalano et al. (2018)

Terminology - Emergent Multilingual

2017 - 2019

Policies: Term used by New York State Education Department (2017)
Illinois State Board of Education (2019)

Meaning: Avoid categorizaitions. Recognize the idea that a student speaks several languages. Value students home language and other dialectics.

Literature: Garcia (2009), Catalano et al. (2018)

Terminology - Transnational Emergent Multilingual Student (crossed borders)

Term used in border studies. This border can be physical (U.S./ Mexico for example) or imaginary

Term connected not only to ethnicity, race, and language, but also with immigration status.

Meaning: An immigrant emergent multilingual student that maintain connection in many ways with country (language, social and digital networks, and family connection).

Literature: Hornberger (2007), Linares (2020), Skerrett (2012, 2015), Fu & Graff (2009)

Other Terms in Policies & Research:

Paulson & Armstrong (2010), Webster & Lu (2012)

- Culturally and linguistic diverse (CLD) - (Perez & Holmes, 2010)
- Learner of English as an Additional Language (LEAL) - Webster and Lu states "LEAL is a politically and culturally appropriate and respecful term that utilizes person first language while also acknoledging existing language competencies" (Webster & Lu, 2012, p. 1)

Delimitations

Delimitations are the specific boundaries the researcher sets during the study's development (Theofanidis, 2018). I strategically examined first-generation emergent multilingual immigrant Latinx, Caribbean, and Haitian mothers living with limited financial resources with 1.5 or second-generation children in Florida's K-12 public schools.

Furthermore, the study recruitment process has been delimited due to safety issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants. With the surge in Coronavirus cases during the data collection, it was safer to conduct virtual individual and paired interviews and use strategic community-based approaches combining testimonial*s* and arts-based methodological approaches.

In addition, conducting research in traditional K-12 public schools during this period was challenging due to the current discourse and politics against Critical Race Theory (CRT). To overcome this challenge, the recruitment process was delimited, and participants were recruited through "digital communities of care" (Veazey, 2021; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018). These are ethnic closed groups on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp created specifically by linguistically and ethnically diverse immigrant mothers and communities to support each other digitally during their migration journey.

Considering that this study is community-based, during the recruitment process, I reached out to immigrant-led initiatives and social justice-based non-profit organizations, including *SantLa - Haitian Neighborhood Cente*r (Miami-Dade County), *the Hispanic Service Council* (Hillsborough County), *The American Civil Liberties Union* (ACLU) *Florida chapter* during a storytelling night and training for undocumented and unauthorized families living in Florida, and the *Brazilian church Igreja da Lagoinha* (Hillsborough County)*,* which supports Brazilian

families to navigate the U.S. culture, policies, and K-12 public schools in Florida. I provide more details in Chapter 3.

Another delimitation is that the study focuses on the lived experiences of mothers through translanguaging. Based on that, I interviewed Latinx, Caribbean, and Haitian emergent multilingual mothers whose first, second, or Lx languages are Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and English. By translanguaging, the mothers and the researcher communicated effectively using their full language repertoire.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research question guiding this study was *How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida?* The sub-question was *How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?*

In this literature review, I searched for peer-reviewed journals to understand the main gaps and issues faced by emergent multilingual mothers, children, and families in schools. I used the University of South Florida library and online databases such as Google Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, PJOSTOR, and others. The terms I used were *English language learners, emergent multilingual students, refugees, immigrant students, asylum seeker families, transnational students, immigrant students, immigrant families, undocumented students, international students, ELL, ELL parents, Latinx mothers, Caribbean mothers, Haitian parents, Haitian families, Brazilian parents, Brazilian families, educational leadership, teachers, multilingual education, families' engagement, parent engagement, leadership, and immigrant students and families experiences, educational policies, and immigrant families well-being, microaggressions, normalization of racism, and everyday racism.*

The Influence of U.S. Policies on Emergent Multilingual Students

White (2012) states that in the 1970s, with the influx of non-Northern European immigrants to the U.S. and the growth of Latinx immigrants on the southern border, white nationalist Americans feared losing English as the official language of American identity. As a result, English-only movements attempted to reinforce English as the dominant language (Judd, 1987), and emergent multilingual learners were forced to accept English-only policies and

assimilate to the American way. The historian Arthur Schlesinger (1991) offers an example of the enforcement of English and nativist ideologies on emergent multilingual students. He states

> Institutionalized bilingualism shuts doors. It nourishes self-ghettoization, and ghettoization nourishes racial antagonism… Using some language other than English dooms people to second-class citizenship in American society…. Monolingual education opens the door to the larger world… Politicians who really care about the future of English should concentrate not on amending the constitution but on accelerating programs to teach newcomers English… expanding language programs will cost money while demanding English as the official language only cost words. The choice between these two approaches is a good test of legislative responsibility (Schlesinger, 1991, p. 108-109).

As pronounced above, non-English speaker students are seen as ghetto, substandard, dumb, and second-class citizens. Blommaert and Verschueren (1992) call this the "dogma of homogeneism," where the "ideal model of society is mono-lingual, mono-ethic, mono-religious, mono-ideological" and it is positive while "pluri-ethnic or pluri-lingual societies are seen as a problem-prone" (p.362). This discrimination and misconception about emergent multilingual students and families are reinforced until the current date through terminologies, educational policies, educational programs, standardized testing, mandated curriculum, and other anti-migration and raciolinguistic practices and processes (Noguera, 2015).

Cummins (2000) highlights that those misconceptions reinforce the idea that English language proficiency is connected to intelligence. If a pupil and their family cannot speak "proper English" based on white, middle-class, patriarchal, and Western norms, those students, families, and communities are considered inferior in U.S. society. Horsford (2015) states that

“the lack of EL-related research is not only stunning but also explains the absence of meaningful policy discussions and the inability for educational leaders and policymakers to craft and implement evidence-based policy solutions designed to improve educational opportunities for the state’s Els’’ (p.167). Cammarota and Aguilera (2012) state that the U.S. should examine its language policies designed to help emergent multilingual students and families and discuss labels such as English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Development (ELD), and English Language Learner (ELL) and how terminologies and language policies influence students' learning and well-being.

Language & Transnational Emergent Multilingual Children & Families

Language is not a mere form of communication. It is a tool to connect emotions, family relations, and language. It is a practice that reflects the history and traditions of a community and their ancestors. When we are discussing the language acquisition of an emergent multilingual individual, we are not only talking about a parent (first-generation immigrant) and a pupil (1.5 generation) who moved or was forced to move to another country and is trying to learn their second (L2), third, fourth, or Lx language. We are not talking only about a U.S.-born child (second-generation) whose first language is other than English. We are talking about a student, and a parent who has a history, ethnic-racial identities, a cultural background (funds of knowledge), and a migration story that matters and needs to be taken into consideration in educational policies, practices, and processes Lemke (2017) explains that many transnational migrants may have left their country due to war, political and identity-based violence, climate change, natural disasters, fear of persecution, discrimination, poverty, and other systemic, political, and personal factors causing traumas and influencing their life opportunities and progress.

According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), there are presently 18.021 million children of immigrants in the U.S. who are under the age of 18. This group includes both the 1.5 generation, which constitutes 12.1% of the foreign-born population, and the second generation, which comprises 87.9% of U.S.-born individuals with immigrant parents (Migration Policy Intitute, 2023). The emergent multilingual students account for 10.3% of the 5.0 million K-12 students currently enrolled in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Hofstetter and Mchugh (2021) state that more than half of students and their parents live in low socioeconomic status, and their challenging conditions "can not only hinder the integration and well-being of immigrant parents but also negatively affect the healthy development, school readiness, and educational success of their children" (p.5).

This transnational emergent multilingual student and parent in border studies is identified as a *transfronterizo.* The term refers to an individual who has crossed multiple borders. This pupil may be a second or third-generation American, but they may still face negative consequences because of their parent's immigration status, affecting students' well-being and their access to services and consequently influencing their academic achievements and other educational and life experiences. This border can be physical, such as the U.S./Mexico border, but also linguistic and cultural. Fránquiz and Ortiz (2017) state that each transnational emergent multilingual student "is fluent in different types of border crossing and these multiple crossings, whether physical or metaphorical, shape their identities, lives, perspectives, and actions'' (p. 111), influencing their experiences inside and outside of the classroom.

Furthermore, this same student has a language and a form of thinking rooted in their parents' home practices that shape who they are and how they perceive the world and learn and connect to their community, family, and heritage. et Wager al. (2017), quoting one of their

research participants, emphasize that “family is part of the heart” and “is an important part of staying close to the family’’ (p. 15). This statement highlights the significance of parental engagement in schools and family-student-school connection, emphasizing the role of schools in recognizing and promoting students' heritage languages to support students and enhance family relationships.

Monzó (2016) shows that English-only practices that value only U.S. knowledge rooted in individualism and independence create conflicts among emergent multilingual students and parents. Students feel that their parents do not fit the “American way’’ creating a conflict at home and a disconnection between child and parents. For example, Cammarota and Aguilera (2012) point out that English-only policies and values not only undervalued students’ identities and language but also motivated teachers in Arizona to put their students with no proficiency in English in detention where those students started to believe and internalize that speaking their home language was a problem encouraging students to consider that their native language is connected to low-status and delinquency. Furthermore, Cammarota and Aguilera (2012) highlighted that one of the consequences of deficit-framing in educational policies is that emergent multilingual students fall behind conventional students, and they do not receive proper education in other fields of study such as sciences, math, reading, writing, history, and others, impacting their academic progress, and their future experiences such as applying for college, jobs, and other opportunities.

Fall (2019) elucidates that understanding how emergent multilingual students “do language is also speaking to their heart” (p.14), and it is a form of embracing students’ identities, their family background, and their past cultural/ethnic experiences. At the moment that educational policies and school practices disregard students’ individualities, community

practices, and their home language(s) to enforce English-only standards and a Eurocentric-American way of life, the U.S. educational system (policymakers, school leaders, teachers, government, families, and society) is enforcing emergent multilingual students to assimilate and replace their culture and language influencing their identities, their values from where they came from impacting not only their social, personal, and academic development, but also their self-esteem (Tran and Birman, 2019; Birman et al., 2002; Nguyen et al., 1999), and their sense of belonging.

Zentella (2005, 2016) conducted ethnographic research with transnational emergent multilingual students, and her research findings show that despite the students' level of proficiency in both languages (Spanish and English), those students faced several forms of language and identity conflicts. Pastor (2007) stated that those conflicts created through crossing borders significantly influence the experiences of emergent multilingual students and families in schools. According to Hersi and Watkinson (2012), there is a limited number of studies that delve into the analysis of policies, teacher practices, and the lived experiences of transnational emergent multilingual children in schools. Their research findings reveal that ethics of caring (Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999) and a culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994) practice where teachers create a safe learning environment in schools that accepts students' "cultural orientations, background experiences, and ethnic identities as conducts to facilitate their teaching and learning" (Gay, 2002, p. 617) have a significant influence on emergent multilingual students' academic progress.

Rolón-Dow's (2005, 2008) empirical work with Puerto Rican girls highlights a need for critical care praxis that understands students of color and how they understand and feel cared for in schools. However, Rolón-Dow states the importance of comprehending the role of

race/ethnicity and social class, how this intersectionality influences students' perceptions and experiences, and how it influences teachers' actions. Furthermore, Rolón-Dow states that for students to feel cared for, school leaders and teachers must listen to students' narratives. Listening to students' and parents' stories and perspectives is essential to changing school practices, curriculum, teachers' actions, and policies, but also, this action can also help students examine their own experiences and help them feel that their voices matter. This practice also gives students ownership of their learning process (Shim & Shur, 2018; Best et al., 2014, Cammarota &Aguilera, 2012). However, this practice is still problematic in schools but also in scholarly work. According to Austin and Hickey (2008):

> transformative education requires authentic knowledge of and connection with the experiences, histories, and hopes of those who inhabit the margins. By this, we suggest that educators must give voice to those whose stories are typically unheard while at the same time opening for critique the dominant hegemonic narratives that would continue the silencing process (p.138)

Tran and Birman (2019) state that educational policies and practices can create conflicts about what non-English speakers are learning at school and diverge with the messages that students "receive at home, with family, and their ethnic community" (p. 713). Mendonza (2009) and Phinney et al. (2001) explain that in contrast to acculturation, enculturation influences the development of children and youth identity.

Language Learning & Emotional Scaffolding

Research shows that English-only policies and practices adversely affect emerging multilingual families, affecting students' cognitive development, self-esteem, and well-being (Muller et al., 2020; Tannenbaum and Berkovich, 2005). Benesch (2012) explains that there are

two cognitive approaches that can influence emergent multilingual students' emotions during their language-learning process. The first is a positive and beneficial cognitive approach used to motivate students during their language acquisition. The second is a negative cognitive process that can cause anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, depression, anger, and shame about their family background (including their ethnic physical features). One of the gaps in studies related to emotions, language learning, and critical thinking is the significant number of theoretical studies, but few with “little or no data or actual examples from actual implications” in schools (Benesch, 2012, p. 48).

As examples of positive and negative cognitive approaches to emergent multilingual students, Kiramba and Oloo (2019) conducted research with African refugees about how language, race, immigration status, and class impact students' experiences in the classroom. Their research shows that racism and negative perceptions about emergent multilingual students of color, such as low academic expectations, lack of intelligence, and issues in behavior, motivated Black refugees to use those biases as a form of *resistance capital*, resilience, and emotional strength to succeed and overcome the negative perceptions that teachers, school personnel, classmates, and society have about the Black immigrant emergent multilingual pupil. In contrast, Rumbaut (1994) conducted a study that focused on the ethnic self-identities of emergent multilingual students from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and their research findings show how educational policies, school practices, and teacher’s expectations influence students’ emotions, especially on immigrant emergent multilingual girls. As Rumbaut points out, deficit-framing perceptions about emergent multilingual students and families adversely affected their emotional well-being. Rumbaut states, “gender was a main determinant of psychological

well-being outcomes, with girls being much more likely than boys to report lower self-esteem, higher depression, and a greater level of parent-child conflict" (Rumbaut, 1994, p. 789).

Back et al. (2020) state that there is a lack of empirical research that understands the lived experiences and emotions of emergent multilingual students, their daily struggles in schools, and how school programs and policies influence those negative experiences. As a response to this problem, more research about translanguaging and multilingual ecology pedagogies has shown the importance of home language in schools to help emergent multilingual students succeed and help them deal with their emotional responses (Back et al., 2020). Hornberger (2003) states that the multilingual ecology approach can be used in policies and practices to understand language.

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> (1) evolve, grow, change, live, and die in an eco-system along with other languages (language evolution); (2) interact with their sociopolitical, economic, and cultural environments (language environment); and (3) become endangered if there is inadequate environmental support for them vis-à-vis other languages in the eco-system (language endangerment); and I suggest that central to the language ecology movement, as for other ecology movements, is that it is about not only studying and describing those potential losses but also counteracting them (Hornberger, 2003, p.296)

Back et al. (2020) explain how notions of language learning anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), translanguaging, and emotional scaffolding can help emergent multilingual students learn and help support their behaviors and well-being. Scaffolding is a term first used by Wood et al. (1976) to analyze parent-child conversation during the child's first years of life. Gibbons (2015) explains that scaffolding is

> not simply another word for help. It is a special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Scaffolding is thus the

> temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone. It is future-oriented and aimed at increasing learner autonomy. As Vygotsky has said, what a child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow (p. 16).

Drawing from Lev Vygotsky (1978), scaffolding is an approach that educators can use to guide emergent multilingual students while teaching them self-control and autonomy in their learning process. Back et al. (2020) highlight the need for more studies that continue to understand the importance of translanguaging and emotional scaffolding for the well-being of emergent multilingual students in K-12 schools. Winsler et al. (2014) state that anxiety and willingness to communicate in their new language impact students' learning experiences and anxiety. The more comfortable and confident students feel in the classroom, the more they take risks during their learning process.

Horwitz et al. (1986) highlight how anxiety in emergent multilingual students can impact students' development; however, having a supportive educational system can help students during their language-learning process. A supportive school environment can help emergent multilingual students succeed and cope and become more confident about their language and ethnic background. Hochschild (1983) uses the term "emotional labour" as a form in which professionals manipulate their emotions to support, motivate, show empathy, and encourage their students. Emotional labour is the process when teachers "suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place" (Hochschild, 1983, p.7).

Park (2014) states that emotional scaffolding is "the importance of emotions in learning. It holds that teachers can help students move forward in their understanding of academic

concepts by stepping in at key moments and supporting emotions which will help students to persist" (p. 21), but also help students to create positive attitudes about learning and how to deal with their own emotions. Furthermore, Park states "when teachers support ELLs' emotions in instruction, they not only increase ELLs' academic achievement in the era of academic accountability but also help classrooms become a fertile ground for meaningful and developmentally appropriate practice'' (p. 28). Catalano et al. (2018) state a need for more work that helps teachers deconstruct their beliefs about language practice and how using native language can help students succeed while preserving students' heritage, culture, and language. Furthermore, teachers need to be more conscious about how they "allow" their students to speak their native language or not. Skutnabb-Kangas (2016) calls this action of allowing others (give permission) to speak their native language as *linguistic imperialism* where "the ideologies, structures, and practices that are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups defined based on language" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016, p. 583).

Galloway and Rose (2015) explain that linguistic imperialism is "discrimination based on language that unfairly treats certain linguistics communities, or unfairly advantages some language over others'' (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 255), and this action can also be a form of *linguistic genocide* which means it is when an individual start to learn a new language and "their own language disappears, the sociological, psychological, educational, and linguistic damage" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016, p. 584). Winsler et al. (2014) research findings show that the native language of students can predict the success of emergent multilingual students in acquiring English; for that reason, when teachers use translanguaging as a pedagogical approach, teachers

are helping students to embrace their language and funds of knowledge, but also help them to get proficiency in English.

Teachers Practice Towards Emergent Multilingual Students & Families

Rizutto (2017) states that U.S. public schools contributed to the damaging misconception about emergent multilingual students' ability to learn English and the negative impacts of home language on students. Anti-immigration political ideologies, lack of multicultural professional development training, misconception about language acquisition, racial/ethnic biases, and little time to know students' and parents' past experiences contribute to teachers' negative attitudes about transnational emergent multilingual students and families. Combined with English-only policies, untrained teachers and school leaders deny students the autonomy to speak their language in the classroom or use their funds of knowledge in their native language to learn English and other subjects. Pettit (2011) highlights that deficit framing, biases, and negative preconceptions motivate teachers to change the curriculum to make the content easier for emergent multilingual students, contributing to their long-term failure. Reeve's (2006) research findings show that underqualified teachers believe that emergent multilingual students should learn English within two years in schools, and those students should not be allowed to use their native language in their classroom. However, Thomas and Collier (1997) point out that an emergent multilingual student living in a motivating environment can take 5-7 years to become fluent in English and perform well in schools and assessment tests.

For example, Walker et al. (2004) conducted mixed-method research where they surveyed 422 K-12 teachers and interviewed in-service teachers to understand their perceptions about teaching emergent multilingual students. Their research findings show that underqualified educators serving emerging multilingual families believe that emergent multilingual students do

not add diversity to their school, and cultural racism influences their teaching practices, how they implement the curriculum to attend to the needs of non-English speakers' students, and their beliefs also influence how they interact with their students creating a student-teacher gap (Shim & Shirt, 2017; Cook-Sather, 2009; Mitra, 2008; 2014).

Emergent Multilingual Families & Poverty

The SES-achievement gap is a "double dose of disadvantage" where students living in poverty often attend troubled schools with limited physical and psychological assets to attend to their basic needs (Neuman et al., 2018). Immigrant children experience "triple segregation'' by the intersection of income, race/ethnicity, and language, causing several forms of discrimination in school (Noguera et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Noguera (2015) states that "education policy has focused on raising academic standards and increasing accountability but largely ignored the social and economic conditions that impact school environments and learning opportunities for students" (p.12). Furthermore, teachers are not sufficiently paid, impacting teachers' motivation and creating a gap between teachers, students, and families. Additionally, students are subjected to a problematic educational program and a flawed curriculum, although students are required to perform well in school assessments and standardized testing.

Low socioeconomic status (SES) and lack of access to a proper education can cause several problems for K-12 emergent multilingual families, especially students foundational language skills, literacy skills, and vocabulary knowledge (Neuman et al., 2018); creating differences can cause a "spiral of causality'' where language and SES can influence students' academic literacy and life opportunities (Mol & Bus, 2011). Winsler et al. (2014) research also shows that a solid L1 language skill can help emergent multilingual students to improve their language acquisition of second, third, or Lx language., but for this to happen, policies and school

practices need to accept the use of students' and families' native language as a tool to help students to succeed. Their findings suggest that poverty influences students' socio-emotional and cognitive skills, impacting language and emotional support needs in schools.

Emergent Multilingual Students & Dis/abilities

A large body of studies about emergent multilingual students reveals the overrepresentation of emergent multilingual students in special education. This issue is not recent. It was introduced more than 53 years ago by Dunn (1968) where he clarifies that 60 to 80 percent of students labeled as mentally retarded were children from low-SES status and from nonstandard English-speaking homes (p. 5) such as Afro-Americans, American Natives, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other immigrants from different ethnicities from the non-Euro-American cultural background. Hulse (2021) points out that this issue remains persistent until today in the U.S. education system. The Department of Education (2021) reveals that 50 percent or more of the ethnic/racial minority students from 3-21 years old who received special education in the 2019-2020 school year are labeled as students with a disability because of their learning disability and language impairment. Sullivan (2011) claims that "it is unlikely that most have educational disability'' (p. 329). As an example, Hulse explains that a high number of Latinx students are labeled in schools as a student with a disability, and this is a civil rights issue where students are penalized by the system and policies for not assimilating and acquiring English proficiency fast as they should or not passing on state tests due to their language barriers (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

Emerging multilingual families are often racialized in school through *epistemic racism* where students and families are labeled as limited capacity where their way of speaking is considered deficient compared to the U.S. standards (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2016), creating a

“coloniality of being’’ (Mignolo, 2000, p. 253) where racial/ethnic diverse students have their lived experiences, language, and schooling influenced through restraining policies that value monolanguaging (de los Rios & Seltzer, 2017). In this case, English (speaking, writing, and formal grammar rules) controls the process of thinking just like “a constitution’s control the state” (Von der Walde, 1997; Mignolo, 2000), and this practice is a form of colonization where bi or multilingualism is not welcomed. Mignolo describes language as an instrument of domination where the education and knowledge of individuals from a country considered the third world (or the Global South) are seen as secondary and substandard, with English as the norm.

Studies show that teachers fail to adequately support emergent multilingual students and parents, contributing to the achievement gap and the overrepresentation of students with disability programs. However, Hachfeld et al. (2010) explain that teachers have been considered responsible for the achievement gap since the first publication of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000. They argue that teachers are not purposely contributing to the achievement gap but are inadequately prepared to help emergent multilingual students from different languages and cultural backgrounds. However, there is still limited research that tries to understand the experiences of emergent multilingual students in the classroom and the impacts of lack of language and holistic support in schools (Keller-Allen, 2006).

One of the gaps in legal literature is the excessive number of emergent multilingual students in special education and its disproportion (Hulse, 2021). Hulse (2021) suggests the need for more reliable studies about this issue and the need for schools to include a culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy in the classroom where educators become more race-conscious and how biases are the root of school inequalities. Kangas’ (2017) ethnographic

research addressed another gap in empirical studies on the experiences of emergent multilingual students, those with disabilities. More research in this area contributes to better evaluations of school psychologists or speech pathologists, reducing the number of students improperly identified as special needs and listening to students' stories and perspectives of understanding the roots of this problem. Kangas (2017) found one study by Thomas et al. (2010) analyzing how emergent multilingual students with disabilities benefit students with non-disabilities and how bilingual programs can create better programs to help emergent multilingual students with disabilities.

Related research was conducted by Artiles et al. (2005), whose findings show that emergent multilingual students enrolled in English-only programs were more referred to special education than emergent multilingual students enrolled in bilingual education programs. They state that some of the reasons are "inadequate screening, invalid assessment instruments, practitioners' beliefs that language differences constitute a disability, school placement practices that are shaped by constantly changing districts reform mandates, accountability pressures, combinations of these pressures" (Artiles et al., 2005, p. 294).

In analyzing the impacts of refugee traumas and past experiences and how it influences their cognitive functioning, school performance, and learning a new language and test performance, Kaplan et al. (2016) pointed out that a refugee often knows several languages due to their migration background. However, they are often not proficient in any of them. Furthermore, if the student did not receive a formal education, they struggle more in the classroom due to the lack of vocabulary in their first language to transfer (code-switch) to English, influencing their progress in school and during their assessment testing. Kaplan et al.

(2016) highlight a need for more studies that analyze and evaluate the educational programs for refugee students and how those programs impact their academic achievements and outcomes.

Emergent Multilingual Student & Curriculum

Past curriculum scholars (Apple, 1979; Anyon, 1980; Giroux,1983) argue that there is no neutral curriculum. Even the hidden schooling curriculum impacts emergent multilingual students and their roles in society, such as consumers and workers (Harklau, 2000). The 'hidden curriculum' generates social meanings, restraints, and cultural values which shape students' roles outside the classroom." (Auerbacvh & Burgess, 1985, p. 476). The curriculum created for emergent multilingual students is structured to show power relations where the English learner is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. For example, the curriculum in schools for refugees and immigrants teaches students how to apply for jobs and become passive and survive; however, there is a need for a curriculum that teaches emergent multilingual students to gain critical thinking and leadership skills.

Umansky and Dumont (2021) show that teachers' beliefs also influence emergent multilingual students' experiences and academic achievement. McSwain (2001) states, "teachers' self-perceptions of cultural and linguistic competency as they relate to helping children achieve academic and social potential play a powerful and intricate role in the type of educational services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse children" (p. 54). Richardson (1996) explains that teachers' beliefs and how they perceive their students can influence their curriculum decisions, the types of subjects that matter to their students, teaching practices, and their relationship with their students. Walker et al. (2004) highlight that when teachers believe in the dominant Euro-American culture, "teachers internalize dominant societal messages, they bring them directly into their schools and classrooms" (p. 131). However, Catalano and Hamann

(2016) state that there is a lack of studies and resources that can support teachers in making the proper changes to accommodate better and help emergent multilingual students succeed in schools. Catalano & Hamman (2016) state that there is a need to understand better the bi/multilingual students' and families' languages and cultural practices to understand better how teachers can bring the culture and language of those students to their classroom. They also recommend more research about education programs and how educators need to receive better training related to bilingualism, biliteracy, translanguating, and proper teaching methods to help emergent multilingual students.

Drawing from Skerrett's (2012, 2015) work, de los Rios (2017) states that transnational students are often disregarded in the U.S. schools programs and curriculum because their "literacy engagements are less understood because they are too simply grouped within the umbrella of immigrant students'' (de los Rios, 2017, p. 456). However, their literacy and life experiences are different and complex than other students, and those differences need to be recognized in policies, curriculum, and educational practices. De los Rios argues that the current sociopolitical issues faced by immigrant students and families, such as harmful immigration policies and procedures, create an "urgency to study their language and literacy practices as a form of resistance, transformation, and possible solutions'' (p. 457) and how it needs to implement in schools to help students to develop their critical literacy and thinking.

Furthermore, studies show the importance of ethnic studies in the curriculum of K-12 public schools as a form to help in the development of transnational youth, but also as a form to bring to the classroom several forms of literacies connected to "race, racism, colonialism, resistance and are some of the precise spaces for engaging transnational students' forms of everyday resistance practices" (de los Rios, 2017, p. 467). However, Paris argues that "current

policies are not interested in sustaining the languages and cultures of longstanding and newcomer communities of color" (p. 95), and we can see this issue in the "English-only" policies throughout the U.S. that ban students from the history, practice the language, and stories of struggle and exclusion of marginalized groups creating a " monocultural and monolingual society based on White, middle-class norms of language and cultural being." (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

Teachers Practices & Emergent Multilingual Students

In the 2017-18 school year, 79% of the teachers in public schools were White and non-Hispanic, and only 9% of the teachers were from a Hispanic background, 7% Black non-Hispanic, 2% other races, and 1% Native American (Department of Education, 2020). The lack of representation of teachers of color and from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is a problem that persists in U.S. public schools, impacting the experience of students and their families. Rizzuto (2017) and Umansky and Dumont (2021) highlight a gap in research that understands teachers' perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse students and how those perceptions impact students' literacy and the quality of education they receive.

Hansen et al. (2014) conducted a survey to understand the teachers' perspectives on emergent multilingual students from rural areas, and their research findings show how teachers need formal and long-term professional training to help teachers improve their attitudes, skills and how to communicate effectively with their culturally diverse students. Furthermore, teachers and school leaders need to improve their communication with emergent multilingual parents. Hansen et al. (2014) recommend more research on rural immigrant students due to the significant growth of rural emergent multilingual students in the United States and other countries. The authors state a need to develop a multi-layer program for rural teachers that addresses second-language acquisition, multicultural education, methodology, and mentoring emergent

multilingual students. Hansen et al. argue that teacher certification in public schools does not provide proper training to help emergent multilingual students deal with daily language, ethnicity, immigration status, race, gender, sexuality, and disability conditions.

Another issue described by Crawford and Witherspoon (2017) is the issues transnational emergent multilingual students face with undocumented status. Those students need language services and emotional support from their teachers, school leaders, and the district. Immigration status can cause diverse issues impacting students' language development, mental health (anxiety, depression, lack of self-esteem), and academic achievement. If school leaders and teachers do not understand the stories of their undocumented students, the lack of training and skills can cause diverse types of traumas and microaggressions on students. Gonzales (2010) states that sometimes undocumented students are transferred into less demanding classes, limiting their access to a better education to develop the social capital to help them succeed.

Moreover, some families do not feel safe sharing their stories and struggles in schools, and instead of having their rights protected, they prefer to keep their children out of school due to the fear of deportation and discrimination. Crowforfd and Witherspoon (2017) state that there is a lack of studies that "capture how K-12 educators maintain trust and relationship with school communities that include undocumented and unauthorized immigrants, and how these relationships impact their decision making, and what are the ethical implications of those decisions." (p. 151). Dávila and Linares (2020) state that undocumented emergent multilingual students face several daily fears, such as deportation due to the growth of anti-immigration rhetoric in the U.S. as a result, students' well-being, emotions, and language development are still impacted. Nieto (2005) states that "providing affection (*cariño)* and support for students, but also developing strong interpersonal relationships with students and their families, learning about and

from them, respecting and affirming their language and culture, and building on these to support learning" (p. 32) can help students academic development, their emotional health, and sense of belonging.

Listen to Emergent Multilingual Students & Parents Voices

Shim and Shur (2017), Best et al. (2014), and Lyon (2009) state that understanding students' lived experiences is vital to listen to their voices and stories and be open to hearing their feedback. Shim and Shur (2017) claim that research about emergent multilingual students often focuses on teachers; however, there is a need for more research that focuses on students' perspectives in teaching and learning. Barkhuizen (1998) states, "language learners are hardly ever asked in any overt systematic way about their language learning experiences'' (p. 85). Cray and Currie (1996) state that to understand the complexity of emergent multilingual students' experiences, there is a need to understand not only the pedagogical processes used to teach non-English speaker students, but it is also essential to understand their social and personal lived experiences and how language, immigration status, race/ethnicity, and class impact their academic and personal development. Furthermore, many of those students were also exposed to traumatic events such as gang and political violence, trauma before, during the process of leaving their country, and post-migration to the U.S., causing depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, food and sleeping disorders, drug addiction, and other issues.

Focusing on undocumented immigrant emergent multilingual students, Gonzales (2010) states the importance of understanding the experiences of undocumented pupils in schools, both high achievers and lesser academic achievers, and how schools assist both types of students. Gonzales (2010) argues that despite their difference in academic achievement and motivation, documented and undocumented students face similar barriers such as language, issues with their

legal status, and emotional problems related to fear of deportation. Understanding students' struggles, drive, and academic resilience is essential because both students cope with their emotions differently, and often, the high achievers' sorrow in silence. However, it does not mean they do not need educational and emotional support despite their academic achievement.

Furthermore, public schools are among the most important institutions that have the "power to either replicate societal inequalities or equalize the field'' (Gonzalez, 2010, p.471). Positive students' experiences in school with a supportive environment can benefit pupils and help them overcome their language, cultural, socioeconomic, and immigration status barriers. However, a lack of school support can motivate students to drop out of school and fall through the cracks.

Adair (2015) states that immigrant children may experience discrimination in school in two different forms: (1) personal and (2) institutional (a.k.a institutional racism). Furthermore, there are four types of microaggression in personal forms: negative interaction between school staff and students, teachers' pressure to improve test scores and classroom tasks despite students' language limitations, negative labels, and low expectations of immigrant emergent multilingual students, and devaluation of their bilingualism and home language. Structural discrimination in schools happens in the form of school segregation by students' race/ethnicity, language, and income; limited resources and overcrowded classrooms where English as a Second Language (ESL) classes often have inferior quality with flawed curriculum and assessment; absence of parents' engagement because there is a lack of teachers and school staff who can communicate to monolingual parents (Adair, 2015). As a result, non-English-speaking immigrant parents feel intimidated to ask for assistance or advocate for their children. What children learn about their identities, abilities, and capacity to acquire knowledge can influence their entire lives, and they

“learn by watching how people around them interact with them and treat them’’ (Adair, 2015, p. 4). Schools are the first place outside of the home where students interact with adults, and this interaction has a significant impact on children's development and well-being. Adair also states that there is a gap in longitudinal study about how immigrant children fare in PreK to college and more research about the experiences of immigrant children and parents in schools and how they view their own experiences.

Another example is the cases of unaccompanied and separated immigrant children in K-12 public schools. Greenberg et al. (2021) explain that not all schools are equipped to help unaccompanied children; as a result, frequently, these children do not enroll or stay in their schools. Greenberg et al. (2021). and Pierce (2015) explain that the issues start with enrollment policies and the lack of students’ social security numbers. Furthermore, schools require proof of residency and several times, children do not have the proper documentation required by schools. As a result, advocates use the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,* a policy that protects homeless children’s rights where schools cannot deny their access to education despite their documents and residency. Besides the lack of school family support, legal status, financial resources, and language barriers, racial and ethnic intolerance are other issues faced by unaccompanied children in schools (Greenberg et al., 2021).

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice issued a policy that highlights that all children have access to equal access to public education despite their immigration status, and the student and their parents are not required to inform their immigration status and other personal information that put them in risk of deportation (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). However, recent studies show that schools' labels and negative interaction with school leaders, staff, and other students motivate unaccompanied or undocumented children

not to attend school. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, unaccompanied immigrant students who are also emergent multilingual students faced several challenges such as language, technology, food insecurity, economic conditions, and childcare (Greenberg et al. l, 2021; Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020), and lack of trauma support (Pierce, 2015).

Pierce (2015) states that unaccompanied and/or undocumented children can also be victims of human trafficking, which means that these students need several types of educational and trauma-care support in schools to succeed and overcome their language and emotional struggles. Fong and Cardoso (2010) state that “administrators, program planners, and evaluators need to recognize that there is a population within the domain of the public child welfare sexual abuse caseload that warrants special attention’’ (p. 315). Those children faced not only sexual but also diverse types of labor exploitation by abusers. As a result, schools need to be prepared to help emergent multilingual immigrant students victims of human trafficking. If teachers, school leaders, and social service providers are not prepared to help those students or neglect their language and cultural components, these same professionals can aggravate instead of relieving the pain of those students.

Another issue is emergent multilingual students (especially indigenous children) who did not receive formal education in their home country (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010). Those students face a hard time in school due to their lack of literacy skills, impacting their school development and relationship with teachers.

Parental Engagement & Emergent Multilingual Parents in K-12 Public Schools

Goodall & Montgomery (2014) highlight the importance of distinguishing between parental engagement and involvement. The authors state that parent involvement refers to parents who participate in school events and other activities. However, parental engagement

> encompasses more than just activity - there is some feeling of ownership of that activity which is greater than is present with simple involvement. This means that parental engagement will involve a greater commitment a greater ownership of action, than will parental involvement with schools (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, p.400).

Many studies on multilingual and multicultural education have examined teachers' experiences (Shim & Shur, 2017) or studied parental engagement from the perspective of privileged parents whose children benefit from dual or multilingual education (Delavan et al., 2021; Cervantes-Soon, 2014). However, few studies still address the involvement and engagement of immigrant parents with little English fluency and limited economic resources (Adbi, 2022; Johnson et al., 2016) and facing immigration challenges (Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzales, 2012). There is also only a limited number of studies that have examined the engagement of vulnerable emergent multilingual immigrant parents (undocumented, refugees, asylum seekers, and international students) with children diagnosed with invisible and visible disabilities in K-12 public schools (Lavín & Francis, 2022; Adams & Santos, 2022).

De Gaetano (2007) highlights that how schools perceive parental engagement does not always correspond with how culturally and linguistically minoritized parents define engagement. Gonzalez et al. (2013) point out that middle- to upper-class parents tend to follow the traditional engagement frameworks approached by schools (e.g., parental association meetings (PTA), volunteering, baking cookies to sell at school, chaperoning field trips), while immigrant emerging multilingual families tend to engage in school based on their funds of knowledge and grounded on their cultural capital (e.g., resilience, through *respeito,* sense of *comunidade,* and *familiarismo*). However, as De Gaetano (2007) states, "cultures and languages of parents who differ from the dominant culture, however, are often ignored, denigrated, or at best, treated

superficially" (p. 145), creating barriers to immigrant parents' engagement and active participation in their children's education.

Grosso Richins et al. (2021) point out that Latinx immigrant parents want their children to succeed in school, achieve the "American Dream, " and have better life opportunities. However, schools and families need to communicate and engage effectively and consistently to make this happen. For this to happen again, schools need to implement strategies where the parents' voices are heard. Doucet's (2011) study findings revealed that Haitian parents end up limiting their engagement in their children's schools to resist mainstream U.S. culture, which does not align with Haitian values and traditions. This act of creating boundaries and limitations shows no sign of parents' passivity, disrespect, or disengagement, as teacher concerns have been expressed in the past (Monzó, 2016), but instead represents advocacy and a form to take ownership of their own children's learning process and a form to preserve their community's values and funds of knowledge very often overlooked in schools. This is especially true regarding their efforts to fight against contemporary forms of racism they face daily in school settings.

Paredes Scribner & Fernández (2017) and Olivos (2004) studies show that Latinx parents received empathy from school leadership when they participated passively (involvement); however, as Latinx parents became more engaged, learned more about their children's rights, achieved more political consciousness, engaged as an advocate for the rights of immigrants and multilingual families, and started challenging the mainstream narratives, school personnel became resistant to parents' efforts since schools are "often accustomed to having a compliant Latino parent population that follows the dictates of the school without question" (Olivos, 2004,

p.27) and without challenging the existing structures of power that disregard the needs of emergent multilingual immigrant children and parents.

According to a study conducted by Cline & Necochea (2001), Latinx parents may have been discouraged from participating in school-related activities and may have had their access to information limited by school officials due to their engagement potentially disrupting school policies and processes. It was noted that some parents may have raised questions that conflicted with the agendas of school leaders and policymakers. Cline & Necochea states

> This silenced cultural voice is typical in many districts, especially those in poor and minority settings that tend to incorporate traditional middle-class perspectives when addressing the complex issues arising from diverse communities. When inevitable conflicts emerge due to cultural collisions, districts tend to become even more entrenched by playing it "safe" as they resolve all community issues in the way they know "best" (what has worked well for them in the past, with little to no regard to the differences in communities served). A silenced cultural voice refers to the sentiment that district personnel represents a monochromatic perspective that reflects a white, middle-class, English-speaking orientation, which could lead to the exclusion and alienation of parents and students who are not a part of the mainstream or dominant culture (Cline & Necochea, 2001, p.98)

Paredes Scribner and Fernández (2017) highlight that schools and policymakers benefit from parent involvement when it aligns with their agenda and ideology, as well as from the "needy," silent, and grateful immigrant parents. However, when Latinx parents begin advocating for their rights, asking difficult questions about equity and inclusion for immigrant and emerging multilingual families, and positioning themselves, they are often persuaded to remain silent and

passive. Previous studies about community-based activism and parental engagement in schools revealed that discontinuous communication in schools that influences emerging multilingual parental engagement is not accidental. The system is intentionally created by an "English-Only," anti-migration, and nativist political system that excludes linguistically and culturally diverse children and families of color from limited socioeconomic backgrounds, reinforcing neoliberal ideologies and white and patriarchal values (Jasis, 2019; Cline & Necochea, 2001)

Deficit-Cultural Model Thinking & Emergent Multilingual Families

According to Antony-Newman (2017), Cervantes-Soon & Turner (2017), and Villenas (2001) studies, emergent multilingual parents are still overlooked and are seen as deficits rather than assets by public schools. This hinders parents' active engagement in their children's education (Cioè-Peña, 2022; 2018). In addition, previous studies have shown that culturally and linguistically, parents of color are often overlooked by school personnel because they are not meeting schools' expectations as opposed to white, English-dominant, and middle-class parents. For example, Warren (2002) stated that sometimes teachers felt overwhelmed by the "lack of a sense of efficacy" of minoritized and underprivileged students and parents (Warren, 2002, p.111). It has also been reported by Thompson et al. (2004) that teachers also perceived the underachievement of emerging multilingual students as the parents' fault since they are not engaging enough in their children's education.

Studies show that biased school officials reinforce the stereotype that Latinx families are problematic, disrespectful, careless of their children's education, "lazy aliens," irresponsible, and uneducated. Negative stereotypes and deficit models have become deeply embedded in schools through nativist and anti-migration sentiments, leading to racism, structural discrimination, and the exclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse families. Due to the lack of welcoming

environments for immigrants and their children, vulnerable immigrants, such as undocumented mothers, find it harder to participate in their children's education. According to Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzales (2012), school deficit thinking is a form of microaggression and institutionalized racism that targets immigrant Latinx parents. For example, Gonzales and Jimenez-Castellanos point out that as schools normalize microaggressions, more undocumented parents become reluctant to engage and send their children to school. Moreover, their research shows that microaggressions often influence children's absenteeism from school because of family fear of deportation. Villenas (2001) call this paternalist and deficit framing as benevolent racism where Latinx mothers are perceived as needy, victims, the “welfare mother” while “the normalization of white/Western middle-class cultural ways (including mothering practices) and the pathologizing of Latino cultures” (p. 9) become prevalent in school environments.

The Gaps in the Literature

There is a gap in research examining the empirical experiences of emergent multilingual immigrant families from limited financial resources and facing immigration challenges, especially from the female guardians' perspectives. However, listening to emergent multilingual immigrant students and families goes beyond oral communication, especially if the mother and child do not speak the standard English language. Furthermore, there is a limited number of studies that examine the experiences of emergent multilingual students and families through arts-based inquiry such as drawing, poetry, photography, and multilingual writing, where students and parents use non-standard language and diverse forms of communication associated with their cultural background, especially of those who are not proficient in English (Marshall and Toohey, 2010; Shim & Shur, 2018; Best et al., 2014), to share their emotions and life experiences. Linares (2020) states that "there is a need for more research that seeks to humanize those,

particularly the children and young people, who are most suffering from the violence, instability, and 'shock-and-awe actions" (p.18). Embracing diverse forms of language expressions of students and families is a way to invite those communities to speak up and share their stories of struggles and resistance without judging them by traditional oral and literacy abilities.

Second, there is little research that understands the emotional aspects of emergent multilingual students and families (Back et al., 2020), the role of educators' identities in advocating for emergent multilingual students (Maddamsetti, 2020), and how school leaders and teachers' biases and negative perceptions influence emergent students development and opportunities, but also parents' engagement in their children's schools (Umansky and Dummont, 2021; Morita-Mullaney, 2018; Kwon et al., 2019; Rizutto, 2017; Morita-Mullaney, 2018).

Third, studies highlight the issues related to the terminology and how emergent multilingual students are classified in schools and policies, the stigmas, and diverse forms of exclusion and harm that those terms generate, including teachers' expectations (Umansky & Dumont, 2021; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). For that reason, there is a need for more studies that examine the self-perception of emergent multilingual students about those classifications and how policymakers need to create an appropriate term that identifies who is an emergent multilingual student without creating stereotypes about students and producing a deficit-learning idea and the pedagogical misunderstanding that "one-size fits all'' where all emergent students learn equally. For that reason, another significant gap in the literature is the need for more research that deconstruct who is an emergent multilingual student and how policymakers, school leaders, and educators need to reevaluate their practices, policies, and beliefs to attend to the need of those students (curriculum, standardized testing, and other English-only policies, teachers' expectations and practices).

The literature also shows the need for more research exploring how transnational emergent multilingual students use literacy to make meaning of their lives while trying to adapt and learn a new culture and the benefits of their home language in their learning process and personal and academic development (Linares, 2020; de la Piedra, 2010). Furthermore, more research is needed to examine the experiences of transnational emergent multilingual students with disabilities and special needs and the services offered to students (Kangas, 2017).

Previous Literature Recommendations for Future Research

It has been recommended that further studies be conducted to examine educators' perspectives on emergent multilingual students as learners with learning deficits and special needs (Hulse, 2021; Rizutto, 2017; Kangas, 2017; Kaplan et al., 2015; Catalano et al., 2018). Kangas (2017) also highlights the importance of breaking down the belief that dual-language programs can be harmful to emergent multilingual students with disabilities. Additionally, empirical studies are needed to examine the overrepresentation of emergent multilingual students in special education and the shortage of trained professionals, including educators and service providers (e.g., counselors, speech therapists, translators, and others), who understand and can properly evaluate these students.

Richards (2017) stresses the need for more scholarly work that examines the use of arts-based to "find ways to access young immigrant children's ideas, knowledge, and concerns - that involves more than oral language" (p. 143). Furthermore, arts can be a tool for social justice while listening to the stories of emergent multilingual students and their families. Previous studies recommend more research on transformative intercultural pedagogy to encourage educators to value family involvement (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study adopted a qualitative approach grounded on a critical theory paradigm. The purpose of this study was to create a space for Latinx and Caribbean emergent multilingual immigrant mothers to share their experiences on their children's public schooling in Florida. The research question guiding this study was *How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida?* The sub-question was *How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?*

The research questions of this study were purposefully designed to center on the lived experiences of Brazilian, Haitian, and Hispanic immigrant mothers in the U.S., who are often marginalized and overshadowed by deficit-framing and systemic racism. This study's design reflects a commitment to amplifying and acknowledging these mothers' perspectives and challenging the power dynamics that perpetuate their invisibility and underrepresentation in K-12 public educational institutions and research.

Before diving into the research design and methodology, I want to acknowledge mothers and the community's crucial role in this study. Their life experiences form the foundation of this dissertation, which strives to provide a better understanding of the challenges emerging multilingual immigrant mothers, children, and families face in K-12 public schools. The stories shared by the mothers in this study represent individual experiences and reflect the current political system in the U.S. As Bernal et al. (2002) state, the process of “testimoniar (to give testimony) is the act of recovering previous experiences, otherwise silenced or untold - and

unfolding them into a narrative that conveys personal, political, and social realities" (p. 364). In this study, mothers' stories shed light on the current anti-migration and systemic racism embedded in educational policies, practices, and processes.

My primary objective as a Latinx scholar and an "outsider" ally was to ensure that emerging multilingual mothers' stories were heard and considered. As Calderon-Berumen et al. (2022) highlight, the objective of research of this nature is "to advocate yet to protect the *mujeres* who have shared their experiences and stories" (p.3). To achieve this goal, I utilized cross-cultural (Penã, 2007; Troman & Jeffrey, 2007), multilingual, and multi-ethnic methodological approaches as a form to embrace mothers' varied ethnicities, languages, and immigration status. Throughout this process, we built trust and nonjudgmental listening (del Alba Acevedo et al., 2001) where mothers and researcher combined all their linguistic repertoire and funds of knowledge (Garcia, 2009; Wei, 2011; Flores, 2014) to communicate and uncover mothers' experiences in their children's school.

Researcher Epistemological Approach

My philosophical framework leans toward critical theory, which is rooted in ideas advanced by "Fitche (alienation), Hegel (dialectic), and Marx (political power) and culminated conceptually in the writings of the members of the Frankfurt School" (Peca, 2000, p.36). Critical theory concentrates on issues of social power and the diverse forms of inequality in society, and methodologically, it is a form of resistance to positivist approaches. Popkewitz (1984) emphasizes that critical theory's purpose is to "change the world, not describe it" (p. 45), and knowledge helps people and society act to contribute to social change. Peca (2000) states that critical theorists shift beyond traditional methodological approaches and expose power and oppressive relations and their impact on society. Furthermore, critical theory exposes reality

through criticism, connects theory and human action, advances dialectic engagement through self-reflection, and instigates self-reflection through the study of communication and language.

The three philosophical research paradigms that influence the set of beliefs and worldviews of a researcher are ontology (theory of reality), epistemology (theory of knowledge), and axiology (theory of values). Ontologically, I explored through critical theory lenses how power relations and diverse forms of oppression are embedded in school practices (i.e., curriculum, school programs, standardized testing, pedagogical approaches, teachers' training and attitudes, and leadership decisions) and how these power relations are defined by social, historical, political, economic, ethnic, and gender structures. Furthermore, it influences the experiences of emergent multilingual immigrant mothers, students, families, and communities.

Bernal (2002) explains that epistemology is the production of knowledge and how one sees and understands the world. Critical theorists acknowledge and value empiricism, participants' lived experiences, and critique positivist approaches where "one size fits all.'' People of Color and other historically underrepresented communities are creators of knowledge, and their epistemologies are important and need to be considered. Flores (2000) states that critical race theorists "uncover and explore the various ways in which racial thinking operates" (Flores, 2000, p.437) in society and what actions need to be taken to create a more justice-oriented world.

This study examined the lived experiences of emergent multilingual immigrant mothers in K-12 public schools and how schools communicate and engage with parents who are not fully fluent in English, their children, and extended families. As an emerging critical theorist, I respect and acknowledge the voices and life experiences of immigrant mothers, students, and families and how their lived experiences matter in schools. Furthermore, critical theorists work together with their research participants and listen to their narratives. Axiologically, the researcher and

the participant work together to deconstruct this system of oppression that colonize and oppress. At the same time, create a reflection and call for action on how school districts, school personnel, and policymakers should embrace emergent multilingual students and families' language, funds of knowledge, intersectional identities, and life experiences in schools.

I believe that knowledge is acquired through a combination of data collection and community-based interaction, research inquiries, and theoretical frameworks. When it comes to qualitative research, I find field observations, in-depth individual, paired, and focus group interviews, arts-based inquiry, and follow-up interviews to be valuable methodological approaches and sources of knowledge. Additionally, self-reflection is key to understanding my own biases and how they may influence my research decisions, data collection, analysis, and sharing of research findings. Through listening to and deconstructing the preconceptions I may hold, I can learn and examine the diverse experiences of my research participants. Writing field notes, memoing, and transcribing interviews while paying attention to my participants' pauses, breaths, and intonations are important and valuable ways to collect data and gain knowledge. This is especially important when examining the forms of oppression experienced by individuals and communities who have been encouraged to remain silent and conform to the standards created by a White, male-dominated, Anglo-American neoliberal system.

Research Design

Throughout this dissertation, I employed a critical qualitative approach. Denzin (2017) explains that with global neoliberalism, qualitative inquiry is often marginalized and devalued. However, the purpose of critical scholarship is "to push back, to resist, to redefine the place of the academy, indigenous epistemologies, and the public intellectual in these public spaces. This is a call for interpretative, critical performative research that matters in the lives of those who

daily experience social injustice." (Denzin, 2017, p. 8). Furthermore, a critical qualitative inquiry "is NOT JUST [sic] a qualitative study. This is ethically responsible activist research" (Denzin, 2017, p.9), where the researcher is committed to social justice and where the voices of oppressed communities are the center of the inquiry. The main goal of a critical qualitative approach is to support communities living in diverse forms of injustice and, through their lived experiences, how research can influence social policies and processes, question and resist inequalities, and encourage community change.

This study examined the diverse types of inequalities encountered by Latinx and Caribbean emergent multilingual immigrant mothers, children, and broader families in schools. Additionally, this study aimed to shed light through mothers' perspectives on the necessary steps that need to be taken to prevent discriminatory practices in schools that hinder the advancement, engagement, and well-being of linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse parents and students. As described by McKitrick (2021), positivist approaches value facts and overlook the root of the problem. Positivist studies degrade the experiences of historically underrepresented and marginalized communities (Black, Indigenous, immigrants, people with dis/abilities, LGBTQ+, women, and others) through logical facts, numbers, and statistics. Okolie (2005) highlights that positivist approaches "hardly recognize the creative potential of humans; they are simple objects responding to the constraints of social facts" (p. 245), and it does not attempt to understand the research actors' perspectives. I chose a critical qualitative methodological approach because it goes against those positivist mainstream standards that value colonial terms, systemic racism, capitalism, and white supremacy. Critical qualitative inquiry gives spaces for Communities of Color to fully express their lived experiences through varied methodologies such as translanguaging (as methodology) and arts-based (painting, collage, photography,

performance, hip hop, dance, poetry, and other forms of arts and ethnic traditions). The varied methodologies break with the status quo constructed by colonial standards in Westernized universities (Grosfoguel, 2013, 2016; Grosfueguel & Mielants, 2009), which limit what data means and belittle the epistemologies and ontologies of Communities of Color and other historically marginalized communities.

***Critical Hermeneutic Considerations*.** Critical qualitative researchers believe that research is not value-free. The researcher's philosophical beliefs influence the methodology, data, and themes analyzed and how others interpret and share findings. In critical inquiry, the hermeneutical approach is the act of interpretation that analyze power structures and system of oppression, and it "build bridges between reader and text, text and its producer, historical context and present" (Kincheloe & Mclaren, 2011, p. 294). Okolie (2005) explains that a critical and anti-racist researcher interprets the lived experiences of their research participants, examines and contextualizes those experiences, and connects with socio-historical and structural factors. Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) highlight that critical hermeneutics "defamiliarize conventional defamiliarizations - in order to achieve deeper levels of understandings" (p.295) and create new ways to deconstruct meanings and interpretations that are already critically familiar. Furthermore, researchers who understand the importance of hermeneutic considerations in their own study can better understand how their epistemologies influence their lives, statements, and text and how their data is interpreted.

Study Background

***Field Experience - A Pilot Study*.** In 2019, I conducted a pilot study in a magnet public high school in southwest Florida. In this study, I applied arts-based research (ABR) paradigm to listen to the stories of immigrant emergent multilingual students from low socioeconomic

backgrounds. Students shared their experiences and emotions in schools through visual arts and how their language, immigration status, race, ethnicity, and gender influenced their experiences in the school they attended. Furthermore, how students' intersectional identities influenced their relationship with teachers, school leaders, and fellow students. Leavy (2015) explains that visual arts can speak more than words. ABR is a method that deconstructs Western knowledge and positivist approaches while sharing the stories of communities and individuals who are historically oppressed, silenced, and "Othered'' by a Eurocentric-American system that devalues the epistemologies of those communities. ABR allows Communities of Color to share their voices, experiences, and emotions despite their language and educational literacy.

In this pilot research inquiry, I examined five Latinx and one Cameroonian middle and high-school students' perceptions about their experiences in their magnet public school. I had access to my research participants through a snowballing approach. According to the school leaders and teachers, all six students who participated during the pilot study were emergent multilingual students who were transferred to a "less challenging'' school because they passed the age to be in middle school, language barriers (reading and writing), and absenteeism in school due to unstable housing, family's immigration status, and parents' unemployment. The pilot arts-based research inquiry was divided into two phases. (1) Phase 1: 20 minutes of meditation and yoga breathing technique practice with students and teacher followed by 30 minutes of arts-based craft and a 40-minute in-depth focus group interview and discussion with students and teachers about the interpretation of participants' pieces of art. (2) Phase 2 was a follow-up interview one week after I conducted the in-depth interview with students.

I learned that incorporating yoga and meditation as a pre-preparation for data collection and in-depth interviews helped me connect with my research participants and create a "safe"

space where they could trust to share their emotions and narratives. Furthermore, this methodological approach helped me to reflect on my axiology as an emerging scholar. After receiving the students' piece of art, I learned that I created a series of expectations. This pilot inquiry taught me that I can not go to the field and collect data with pre-existing expectations. Every student has a form to express their emotions and thoughts. As a researcher, I need to ensure that participants are comfortable sharing their voices in their own way and ensure that my expectations do not influence research participants.

Concluding, this experimental research revealed that just because an emergent multilingual student is orally fluent in English does not mean that this student does not need language and other services such as mental health (therapy and counseling) support. Additionally, the follow-up interview with students was unnecessary. At times, follow-up interviews can bring negative memories to students and cause re-traumatization in research participants, especially if themes such as deportation, family separation, microaggressions, bullying, political trauma, and family violence show up during the focus group reflections.

Research Method Design

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I proposed and implemented a community-based digital research (CBDR) approach that builds upon traditional community-based research (CBR) methodologies. Strand et al. (2003) explain that "CBR is a partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change" (p.3). It is a methodological approach particularly relevant to work with historically underrepresented communities facing economic hardship, invisibility, and disenfranchisement. CBR uses a community collaborative approach that "recognizes the community as a social and cultural entity" (Israel et al., 2001, p. 184), and

their epistemologies and praxis are valued and considered in research. Community-based research values underrepresented community knowledge and promotes a reflection on whether knowledge is valuable and considered in policies, practices, and processes.

The principles of traditional CBR are (1) collaboration between researcher and community members, (2) validation of multiple sources of knowledge and use of varied methods to disseminate this knowledge, and (3) focus on action and social change (Strand et al., 2003). Community-based research gives the possibility for the researcher and community to cooperate and co-learn during the process of conducting research. Furthermore, it goes against colonial ideologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and praxis in academia. Non-binary identities, values, behaviors, cultural practices, orality, storytelling, funds of knowledge, and testimonials are respected and appreciated. Torre (2009) explains that communities who live in diverse forms of structural repression "hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences" (p.111), and their input is important and needs to be taken into consideration. Historically, CBR is rooted in critical and advocacy paradigms that reveal social justice issues experienced by underserved communities and provide recommendations from the community's perspective, those who are underserved and affected daily by those systemic discriminatory practices and policies.

Incorporating Technology into Community-Based Research. As technology continues to evolve, it is crucial for critical qualitative research methodologists to keep up with new and modern forms of knowledge, community work, and data collection. This becomes even more significant during and after a global pandemic, as stated in a recent study by Marques et al. (2021). Through community-based digital research, critical qualitative researchers can broaden their methodological approaches, challenge traditional research methods, and adapt their recruitment and strategies to reach the community. Meanwhile, I acknowledge the challenges

and cyber threats that technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can pose in critical qualitative research. However, I also believe that using diverse forms of contemporary technology can help critical qualitative researchers connect and reach out to underrepresented communities, including individuals and community-based organizations living in underserved communities or experiencing structural and political barriers that prevent them from participating and engaging face-to-face in research. Additionally, it serves as a means of adjusting to the practices of modern society, particularly when operating within K-12 public schools where children, youth, and families are involved.

Digital community-based qualitative research offers the possibility for the safe participation of individuals and families who may not feel comfortable sharing in person their life experiences and the stories of oppression in their community. CBDR presents new possibilities and serves as a valuable tool for connecting transnational communities, breaking down territorial, linguistic, and other forms of visible and invisible borders, and fostering collaboration between researchers and historically underrepresented communities. By sharing their unique perspectives through technology, underserved communities provide valuable insights that can be used to make policy and practice recommendations and advocate for human rights and social justice. Through CBDR, the community is not on the margins but in the center through contemporary and innovative forms of communication and digital technologies. Flexibility and adaptability are also key components of this approach, as each community has unique realities and challenges that need to be considered. This dissertation showed me the importance of shifting how critical qualitative researchers think and adapt to the new possibilities of conducting community-based research.

Study Context: Coming Up with a Backup Plan

The original plan was to conduct a multilingual focus group at a dual-language charter school in a rural area of Florida, where most residents were Chicanx and Latinx farmworkers. However, permission to conduct the study at that school was not granted. Despite the difficulties in recruitment and the researcher's concerns about failure, the absence of support from the charter school had a positive impact on the study and opened up new possibilities during this study process. To reach out to the community, digital media was employed as an alternative plan to conduct this qualitative study.

As an emerging scholar in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, I had to adjust and implement innovative methodologies without compromising on the study's purpose and scope. To achieve this, I spent time researching how Latinx and Caribbean immigrant communities connect and communicate in the U.S., particularly during the ongoing COVID-19. Grounded on my positionality, experience, and skills as a journalist and news producer in my home country, I designed a recruitment process that reached multilingual immigrant mothers across various communities in Florida (rural and urban). By leveraging technology and social media, I engaged with and recruited mothers from diverse backgrounds, including those with varying linguistic, ethnic, national, racial, socioeconomic, migratory, and dis/abilities backgrounds. This digital approach enabled me to connect with communities that previously could not be reached in person due to the researcher’s connections and financial, time, and geographical constraints.

Social Media. I initially utilized Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn as my social media recruitment platforms. However, I discovered LinkedIn was too middle-class businesslike for the particular community I was trying to reach for this study. Additionally, I found Instagram to be less effective for recruitment. In response, I focused my efforts on leveraging the strengths of

private ethnic groups on Facebook. This strategy yielded a pleasant surprise as I began establishing connections with mothers through "digital communities of care," statewide community-based organizations, and ethnic churches previously unknown to me.

Mothers Digital Communities of Care. In Chapter 4, I further explore the concept of "digital communities of care" (Veazey, 2021; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018), which I came across during the recruitment process and was part of this study's findings. However, these digital communities of care are formed by underrepresented ethnic groups through social media and other digital platforms such as WhatsApp. They provide a valuable resource for immigrant mothers navigating the complex U.S. system, which can often exclude and silence emerging multilingual immigrant families. Within these communities, mothers can feel safe to speak up, share their experiences, utilize their native language or translanguaging strategies to support one another, promote a sense of community, reduce migration loneliness, and advocate for their families' rights. Additionally, they offer digital peer emotional support to families facing immigration challenges, poverty, and discrimination.

I discovered these communities while searching for private ethnic groups on Facebook to share the study flyer. Through these virtual communities and a snowballing approach, I connected with mothers, families, and allies from different parts of Florida. Their digital support was invaluable for this study - they re-shared the flyer in their personal communities, gave me advice on where to reach mothers, and even printed the digital flyer that I posted on Facebook to share in their children's schools, helping other mothers to reach me and learn more about the study. Without the support of these "digital communities of care," I could not have completed this study and reached out to community-based organizations and mothers. These digital communities of care are a contemporary form of how transnational communities connect and

support each other, using their full linguistic repertoire and funds of knowledge as a form of family advocacy and immigrant-led digital activism.

Statewide Community-Based Organizations. During the recruitment process and through the mothers' “digital communities of care” and closed ethnic groups on social media, I discovered several community-based organizations I had not been aware of. These organizations are dedicated to helping emergent multilingual immigrant families living in vulnerable situations in Florida. After researching them further, I reached out to see if they could assist me in recruiting mothers for the study. While several mothers contacted me about the study, I still had difficulty reaching mothers interested in participating.

The leadership of these organizations kindly agreed to meet with me via Zoom digital platform to learn more about the study, ask questions, and ensure that this study aligned with their mission and values. This interaction occurred for 20 weeks (five months) as I continued to try and recruit mothers. Shortly after our meetings, they notified me that they would indeed be able to assist me in reaching mothers. The community-based organizations and a church that virtually supported this study were:

Hispanic Services Council. Established in 1992, this private non-profit organization is dedicated to supporting Latinx children and their families in Hillsborough County. Initially, the organization provided informal bilingual translation services and referrals to various resources through their Spanish hotline, *Linea Hispana*. However, since 2011, they have shifted their focus to education, health, economic mobility, and civic engagement for Latinx families from limited financial resources. As part of their efforts, they offer free weekly evening training sessions for parents, where they teach emergent multilingual mothers in Spanish about the K-12 educational

system in Florida, their children's rights, and how to advocate for them, regardless of their language proficiency and immigration status.

Upon contacting the leadership of the Hispanic Services Council, I received valuable feedback regarding my research methodology. They expressed concerns about the feasibility of conducting three focus group meetings (1 ½ hour each), given the daily challenges faced by the mothers. Furthermore, they asked me to attend in person the *La Red de Padres Activos* (Network of Active Parents), their free evening parent training classes in various locations throughout Hillsborough County, so I could speak with mothers and share the study's flyer. They emphasized that most of the mothers did not speak English, and I should explain the study in Spanish and provide a printed Spanish flyer and the research verbal consent script so the mothers could take it home, read it, and reflect if they want to volunteer. These free, two-hour training classes are specifically designed to educate Latinx parents of elementary and middle-school children in Hillsborough County, Florida.

During this time, the organization was allowed to conduct in-person meetings while adhering to specific safety measures, such as using masks and strict adherence to physical distancing guidelines. I followed all safety protocols to guarantee the safety and well-being of mothers, educators, and children.

During my ten visits to different classes in rural and urban areas such as Wimauma, Plant City, Drew Park, and Brandon, I found that most attending parents were emergent multilingual mothers from Mexico, Central America, and South America. While the mothers attended the parental training, volunteers provided snacks or dinner for their children. Additionally, there were sometimes free clothing donations available for families in need. These meetings are usually held in the evenings at local Christian churches.

At the beginning of each class, the instructor - who also happened to be an immigrant Spanish speaker - would introduce me to the mothers. My task was to explain my research within 10 minutes, provide them with a printed Spanish research verbal consent form and flyer, and encourage them to read it at home. Additionally, I emphasized that the research was completely confidential and that if any mothers were interested in volunteering, they could contact me via WhatsApp to schedule a virtual interview. Some mothers expressed their desire for an in-person interview due to their lack of a computer, internet access, and a safe space to share their experiences. Through this interaction, I attained a valuable understanding of the digital and structural obstacles encountered by immigrant families, particularly those residing in rural areas of Florida. Typically, 8 to 15 parents were present during the training sessions, all in the early stages of their English language acquisition journey. In rural training locations, the attendees were primarily Mexican and Central American mothers, while urban sessions saw a higher concentration of Mexicans and South Americans, based on my field observations.

With the instructor's permission, I sometimes stayed in the back of the classroom after speaking to the mothers. This allowed me to learn more about the parenting classes curriculum used in those meetings and answer any questions they might have had about the study. I found that this was an effective way to establish a connection with the community, build trust, and demonstrate that I genuinely cared about the experiences of immigrant families. As a result of this digital connection with the Hispanic Service Council, I met and interviewed mothers from Central and South America with varied backgrounds, including children with visible and invisible disabilities and mothers with asylum, refugee, and mixed migration status.

SantLa - Haitian Neighborhood Center. After struggling to connect with Haitian mothers for five months, I came across SantLa on social media. Based in Miami-Dade County,

this Haitian organization was founded in 2000 to raise awareness about available resources to Haitian families in the South Florida community. Today, SantLa has expanded its community support to include citizenship assistance, translation, college scholarships for families in need, community partnerships with other Haitian and immigrant communities, and support for local organizations with developing cultural competence, sensitivity, and how organizations can support Haitian families while respecting their funds of knowledge. SantLa also hosts community forums encouraging the Haitian community to improve their leadership skills and find practical solutions to their daily needs. Additionally, SantLa produces a Haitian Creole-language educational television talk show called Teleskopi, which keeps Haitian families informed about important issues in their communities in Florida.

Upon reaching out to SantLa, I was able to schedule a virtual meeting with the leadership to explain my dissertation and the challenges I faced in reaching the Haitian community. They provided valuable insight, explaining that effective communication with the Haitian community requires adapting to the Haitian community's realities. I learned that traditional methods like phone texts and emails are not as effective as using WhatsApp, the primary communication platform used by the Haitian community. Additionally, I discovered that many Haitian families living in the U.S. have migrated to Brazil previously and learned Portuguese, prompting SantLa to request a 1-minute video in both Portuguese and Haitian Creole explaining the study and how potential volunteer participants could reach me. With the help of a Haitian friend, we recorded two short videos in both languages. SantLa sent the videos to the Haitian community through WhatsApp. To my surprise, a few hours later, I received several enthusiastic responses from Haitian mothers who spoke Portuguese and were living in vulnerable conditions due to their

immigration status. Some of them even called me using the video call while they were on the public bus, showing their excitement to speak Portuguese.

The digital interaction with SantLa allowed me to interview Haitian mothers who recently immigrated to the U.S. without needing a translator since they spoke Portuguese (the researcher's first language). One of these mothers was a single undocumented parent, lived in homeless conditions with her three children, and had a child who had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and needed intensive support.

Igreja da Lagoinha Tampa Church. As a fellow Brazilian, I faced challenges reaching out to Brazilian mothers due to their fear of immigration, family separation, and deportation. However, through the digital communities of care, I learned about the *Igreja da Lagoinha*, a Brazilian church in Hillsborough County that conducts all its services in Brazilian Portuguese. I attended their Sunday services and asked the church leadership for support. After explaining the study, we continued to communicate through WhatsApp, and they connected me with the women's leadership team. The women's leadership team asked me to record a brief video in Portuguese explaining the study and how mothers could reach me if they were interested in volunteering. The 2-minute Portuguese video was shared on their Brazilian women's WhatsApp group, and I received several inquiries from interested mothers.

While it was gratifying to connect with Brazilian mothers, I also encountered some who were anxious to participate officially due to concerns about safety, privacy, and their immigration status. Our informal phone and Zoom conversations sometimes lasted 30 minutes in Portuguese where we shared our migration stories, and they provided recommendations to schools and families. However, their fear of deportation prevented them from participating officially in this study. This experience has highlighted the significance of engaging with digital

communities and seeking guidance from community leaders of different ethnic and religious backgrounds when conducting community-based research. Even though some of these Brazilian mothers were not included in the study, the use of technology (WhatsApp chatbox platform) enabled me to connect with them and gain insight into their personal experiences, as well as the various challenges emerging multilingual immigrant families face in both the structural and emotional aspects of school life.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Throughout the recruitment process, I had the chance to familiarize myself with the ACLU Florida chapter and its virtual Immigration task force. As I dove deeper into their values and mission and connected with ACLU Florida's leadership, I discovered the need for volunteers to assist with their events and community outreach. I began attending their once-a-month evening digital task force meetings and was inspired to become a digital volunteer. This allowed me to connect with immigrant youth, families, activists, and allies from different areas of Florida. This experience taught me about specific anti-migration policies and the constitutional rights of immigrant families in the U.S. As a digital volunteer, I supported two ACLU digital events, the *Storytelling Night* and the *Know Your Rights & Justice.*

The digital *Storytelling Night & Justice* event provided a platform for the immigrant community to share their stories and struggles related to their immigration status and access to public services in Florida. *Know Your Rights*, a 1-hour digital workshop, educated undocumented families and students about their rights if stopped by police officers in public spaces. As a digital volunteer, I was honored to be a host for one of the *Know Your Rights* events, supported the technology logistics of the digital workshop, and assisted in community outreach. This experience allowed me to reach out to the Latinx and Caribbean communities in

Florida while educating myself on how to be an ally and the specific rights of undocumented and unauthorized families. My involvement with the ACLU also enabled me to reach more Haitian families.

While recruiting participants for my dissertation, I discovered a valuable opportunity to provide digital support to the community while maintaining clear boundaries between myself as a researcher, the organizations involved, and potential participants. This was also a way for me to give back to the community for their support throughout this study. By volunteering digitally and engaging with leadership and immigrant families of various immigration statuses, I gained a deeper understanding of their complex challenges due to intersectional and structural issues. Thanks to the help of four community-based organizations, I expanded my outreach and connected with diverse mothers and communities in Florida, including mothers with limited financial resources, varying immigration statuses, and different linguistic and ethnicities.

Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment Phases. Following the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the recruitment process was carried out in five phases, with phases 2 to 5 occurring concurrently. The entire recruitment and data collection process took about 20 weeks (5 months) after the IRB approval (2 months).

Table 3: *Recruitment Phases*

Recruitment Phases	Research Recruitment Strategy
Phase 1 Pre-IRB Action From November 2021 – February 2022 Historical Context: COVID-19 & schools' initial transition to in-person classes	• IRB Writing Process • Creation of multilingual flyers • Creation of multilingual verbal consent. I chose verbal consent to protect mothers' identities due to their immigration status and fear of deportation. • Creation of open-ended and semi-structured interview questions • IRB Protocol Submission • IRB Approval (2 months after submission) • Permission to start the recruitment
Phase 2 Recruitment Action From March 2022- August 2022 5 months of recruitment and data collection	• The Researcher started to search for Brazilians, Hispanics, and Haitian ethnic groups living in Florida through Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn groups. • During the recruitment, I discovered that Instagram and LinkedIn were ineffective research recruitment platforms. • Ethnic communities tend to utilize Facebook private groups and WhatsApp more frequently. • I observed that traditional texts and formal emails are ineffective communication and methodological approaches to reaching emerging multilingual immigrant mothers. • The researcher waited to be accepted into the digital communities of care to share the flyer and ask for support. • The researcher personalized the individual messages in each ethnic and digital community of care groups. • To ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity in multilingual messages, the researcher sought the assistance of a Spanish and Haitian Creole native speaker to peer-review the personalized messages. This allowed the researcher to respect the language and culture of each community. As a native Brazilian Portuguese speaker, the researcher could personally ensure the accuracy of the Brazilian Portuguese translations without needing peer review. • After the community approval, the researcher posted the flyer and the multilingual personalized message in each digital community of care and other closed ethnic groups on Facebook. • To ensure the safety and comfort of the mothers participating in the study, the researcher established a personal WhatsApp account with end-to-end encryption. This allows the mothers to communicate via WhatsApp text and audio without fear of unauthorized sharing of their personal information and stories. • End-to-end encryption is a form of cyber security to protect mothers' digital privacy and avoid the information from being hacked and re-shared with others. • The researcher started learning about Hispanic community-based organizations and asking for their support. • In the first three weeks, potential Hispanic participants contacted the researcher to learn more about the study. • To ensure respect for the ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of mothers, the researcher took measures to answer potential questions about the research in mothers' native or chosen language since some mothers spoke 2-3 languages. This communication was done through translanguaging, using both audio and text messages. The aim was to establish trust between the potential research participants and the researcher. The answers were provided in text and audio formats, covering Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and English. However, due to the researcher's oral language limitations, Haitian Creole speakers were only provided with text responses.

Table 3: *(Continued)*

Phase 3 Snowballing Approach Action & Digital Community Engagement	• Numerous Hispanic, Haitian, and Brazilian mothers contacted the researcher via WhatsApp, providing invaluable advice on the most suitable digital communities to share the flyer and how to approach community leaders for support. • The Latinx and Haitian communities also shared information about non-governmental organizations in Florida that work with immigrant emergent multilingual families and children in schools. • The researcher contacted these organizations and attempted to schedule a virtual meeting to explain the research, request support in sharing the flyer, and connect with volunteer mothers who meet the research criteria. • The researcher was fortunate to have the digital support of four community-based organizations: *Hispanic Services Council*, *SantLa - Haitian Neighborhood Center, Igreja da Lagoinha Tampa Church*, and the *American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)*.
Phase 4 Interview Action	• Several Brazilian mothers contacted the researcher, but due to their immigration status, they chose not to participate in the study. Nonetheless, they wanted to share their experiences informally, provide recommendations to schools, and advise mothers struggling to find diverse educational services available in public schools, such as honor student programs and schools focusing on arts and STEM fields. • The researcher initially planned to create a focus group, but due to the busy schedules of the mothers, I decided to conduct paired in-depth interviews through Zoom instead. Only four mothers could participate in paired interviews due to their schedules. • To accommodate the scheduling challenges, the researcher decided to adapt again and conduct individual interviews to respect the mothers' realities. • The researcher explained the study and asked each mother to create a piece of art sharing their experiences in their children's school. • Some mothers submitted their art pieces through WhatsApp, while others did not due to their busy schedules. • In a rural area of Florida, a mother with a child with dual dis/abilities, including asylum immigration status, requested an in-person interview due to the lack of internet and computer access. The researcher responded with empathy and arranged for a comfortable setting, a nearby breakfast restaurant, to conduct the interview. The interview was conducted in Spanish to ensure that the mother was able to share her story without any language barriers. • During a virtual interview, a Haitian mother with undocumented status sat with her three children. She expressed a desire for her children to participate in the conversation, as they were excited to hear the researcher and her mother speak Portuguese. The researcher took great care to honor the mother's wishes while ensuring that the questions asked were not sensitive and did not cause any harm to the mother and her children. • Thirteen interviews were conducted in Portuguese, Spanish, English, and through translanguaging. A total of nine individual and four paired interviews. Interviews were not conducted in Haitian Creole due to the researcher's language limitation. • A few mothers also asked their children and relatives to create a piece of art explaining their experiences in their schools, but due to IRB protocols, the researcher did not include this data in the study.

Table 3: *(Continued)*

Phase 5 Post-Interview Follow-Up Action	• The mothers requested that the follow-up interviews be conducted via WhatsApp. The researcher accommodated the mothers' requests. • Throughout the transcription, coding, and data analysis process, the researcher followed up with the mothers. • Some mothers submitted artwork during the follow-up phase. • A mother chose to stop following up due to personal reasons. • After the researcher's reflection and due to the sensitive nature of the topics being discussed, including immigration status, mental health, racism, bullying, and exclusion in schools, the researcher ultimately decided to discontinue follow-up to prevent potential harm to the participants.

Research Participants

Prior Considerations. Thirteen mothers volunteered to participate in the study, hailing from various Latin American and Caribbean countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Haiti, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. These women are transnational *madres* and *mujeres*, having lived in multiple Caribbean, Central, and South American countries throughout their lives. Some of these mothers have faced significant challenges, such as political conflicts, gender-based violence, poverty, and healthcare issues, which led them to seek refuge and asylum in different nations. For instance, one mother from Haiti had to flee to Brazil with her four young children after losing her husband to political violence and watching one of her daughters become a victim of gender-based violence. While living in Brazil, she and her children became fluent in Portuguese; however, due to racism, they migrated to the U.S., and today, they are living with undocumented status in Florida.

Another mother, originally from Colombia, had to move to Venezuela and Panama due to geopolitical, health, and socioeconomic circumstances throughout her life. As a result, she feels a sense of belonging to all three countries since they have all been a part of her story since childhood. So, she is not only Colombian but also self-identifies as Venezuelan and Panamanian.

It is essential to recognize that every mother has a unique migration story and experience that deserves thoughtful consideration throughout the research process, including recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. These stories and demographics are important and reflect the diversity and intricacy of emerging multilingual immigrant families. Moreover, it shows the challenges involved in designing cross-cultural studies and methodologies that reflect the complexities and realities of transnational families and communities. Additionally, experiences in this study highlight the significance of avoiding conventional Western-based demographic categories. As researchers, it is crucial that we approach these families with empathy, compassion, and respect, especially when it is related to their sociocultural and racial identities.

Additionally, some mothers who initially entered the U.S. under visitor immigration status later applied for asylum and remained in the country for several years before obtaining refugee or other migratory status. As a result, these mothers have experience as asylum seekers and as permanent immigrants (green card holders). The differences between these migratory statuses can significantly influence their and their children's access to public services and basic needs such as employment, housing, food security, education, and other basic human rights needs. Therefore, the fact that a mother's current immigration status is permanently resident or mixed status does not diminish the years of experience she and her children had in their school before the change of status occurred.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that even though a mother can speak a little English or is considered bilingual in multilingual communities, she may still face raciolinguistic discrimination in English-only environments. This shows that social identities can be dynamic and fluid, particularly regarding ethnicity, nationality, race, language acquisition, dis/abilities, and immigration status.

Demographics of the Research Participants. The participants of this study comprise mothers who identify themselves as Latinx and Caribbean and speak Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Spanish, and varied levels of English at home. Additionally, they have an emergent multilingual child enrolled in a K-12 public school in Florida and come from limited financial resources. I also included English because multilingualism is a dynamic process. A mother and a child can be bilingual and still be labeled and treated as an outsider and a non-English speaker.

Throughout the interviews, I approached mothers with a respectful inquiry regarding their immigration status. However, a few mothers avoided disclosing such information, including their journey toward U.S. permanent residency. In full respect of their privacy, I refrained from further inquiry. Additionally, all names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their personal information.

Table 4: *Maternal Background Information*

PR- Permanent Residency Status

Name	Nationality	Immigration Status	Age	Marital Status	# of Children	Language Spoken at Home	English Language Proficiency	Employment	Time living in the U.S.
Maria	Colombia/ Venezuela/ Panama	Asylum - still waiting for her immigration status = no social security number	26	Married	1 in Venezuela	Spanish	Basic	Unemployed/ No social security number = not allowed to work in the U.S.	1 ½ years
Lopez	Dominican Republic (DR)	Permanent Status	36	Married	1 in DR 1 in the US	Spanish	Basic	Unemployed	7 years
Isabel	Venezuela	Visitor visa + Political Asylum + PR	35	Single	2	Spanish	Basic	Employed	5 years
Margarita	Colombia	Permanent Resident + Mixed Status	38	Single	2	Spanish	Basic	Employed	4 years
Lucia	Venezuela	Permanent Resident + Home Mixed Status	37	Single	1 in the US	Spanish and English	Intermediate	Employed	9 years

Table 4: *(Continued)*

Valentina	Venezuela	Refugee + Home Mixed Status	44	Married	1	Spanish and English	Basic	Unemployed	7 years
Angela	Brazil	International Student (F1 Visa) + Home Mixed Status	40	Married	1 in Brazil 1 in US	Portuguese and English	Intermediate	Unemployed	4 years
Ana	Brazil	Permanent Status	50	Married	1	Portuguese and English	Basic	Employed	6 years
Anair	Brazil	Temporary Resident, Work Visa	35	Married	2	Portuguese	Basic	Unemployed	2 years
Janaina	Brazil	International Student (F1 visa) + Home Mixed Status	45	Married	2	Portuguese	Basic	Unemployed	1 year
Ophelie	Haiti	Permanent Status	33	Married	4	Haitian Creole, French, and English	Intermediate	Employed	6 years
Madaleine	Haiti	Permanent Status	37	Married	2	Haitian Creole and English	Intermediate	Employed	15 years
Nadege	Haiti	Undocumented	39	Single	3	Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish	Basic	Unemployed/ not allowed to work in the U.S.	1 ½ years

1 ½ generation: Migrated to the U.S. as a child **2nd-generation:** U.S-born (U.S. citizen)

I opted to prioritize the child's full languages proficiencies rather than solely English language to acknowledge and validate their children's entire linguistic repertoire (see table 5).

Table 5: *Children's Background*

Mother	Child's Age	Immigration Status	Generation	Gender	Grade	Dis/ability	School Type and Location	Language Proficiency
Maria	8	Asylum - still waiting for his immigration status change	1 ½ generation	Male	Elementary	Autism & Visual Impairment	Public School, Rural	Basic English Native Spanish

Table 5: *(Continued)*

Lopez	11, 2	Asylum (PR)	1 ½ and 2nd generations	Male & Female	Middle School	No	Public School, Urban	Intermediate English Native Spanish
Isabel	14, 8	Tourist, Asylum (PR)	1 ½ generations	Females	Middle & Elementary School	No	Public School, Urban	Intermediate English Native Spanish
Margarita	8, 2	Permanent Resident, U.S. citizen	1 ½ and 2nd-generations	Females	Elementary & Kindergarten	No	Public School, Rural	Intermediate Spanish, Basic-Intermediate English
Lucia	6	U.S. citizen	2nd generation	Male	Elementary School	Speech Delay	Traditional PS & and moved to School-Choice Public Program, Urban	Advanced English, Intermediary Spanish
Valentina	8	Refugee	1 ½ generation	Male	Elementary School	No	Public School, Urban	Advanced English Intermediate Spanish
Angela	11, 2	Child of an International Student (F-2 visa) & U.S. citizen.	1 ½ and 2ndgeneration	Male, Female	Elementary School	No	Public School, Urban	Native Portuguese, Intermediary English
Ana	14	Permanent Visa	1 ½ generation	Female	High School	No	Public School, Honor Student	Native Portuguese, and Advanced English
Anair	12	Temporary Visa, Work Visa	1 ½ generation	Female	Middle School	No	Public School, Urban	Portuguese Native, Intermediary English
Janaina	12	Children of International Students (F-2 Visa)	1 ½ generation	Male, Female (twins)	Elementary School	No	Public School, Urban	Basic English Native Portuguese Speaker
Ophelie	6, 4, 3, toddler	U.S. citizens	2nd-generation	Males, Females	Elementary, Pre-K, and Kindergarten	No	Public School, Urban	Intermediate English Basic - Intermediate Haitian Creole, Basic French

Table 5: *(Continued)*

Madaleine	11, 13	U.S. citizens	2nd-generation	Male, Female	Middle School	No	Public School, Urban	Advanced English, Basic Haitian Creole
Nadege	18, 16, 12	Undocumented	1 ½ generation	Female	High School & Elementary School	Autism	Public School, Urban	Basic English Native Haitian Creole Advanced Portuguese and Spanish

Screening Tools

Recruitment Selection Criteria. Umanã-Taylor and Bámaca (2004) state that screening tools are fundamental in qualitative research to ensure participants can contribute to the study while they feel comfortable sharing their stories. Some of the criteria used in this study were

Gender. I specifically chose to recruit cisgender women for this study for two main reasons. Firstly, this study is grounded on critical Latinx and Black feminist approaches. Secondly, fathers and mothers have different parenting roles in Western society that can significantly influence their children's socialization (Rumbaut, 1994). Therefore, this study aims to examine the experiences of cisgender mothers.

Language. Mothers who self-identify as emergent multilingual and native language is Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, and/or Haitian Creole.

Ethnicity and Nationality. I did not limit the country of the research participants due to the diversity of Latinx and Caribbean emergent multilingual students in Florida. The thirteen mothers eligible to participate in the study were mothers from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Race. This study focuses on Latinx and Caribbean women of color and how their race and ethnicity influence their experiences in schools. It is also important to emphasize that the definition of race and ethnicity in the U.S. differ from Latin America and the Caribbean (Wade, 2010).

Social Class. This study delves into the experiences of emerging multilingual immigrant mothers from low socioeconomic backgrounds, examining how their class, gender, race, and immigration status intersect to impact their lives and those of their children. It is important to recognize that a mother's middle-class status in their home country may not translate to the same socioeconomic standing in the U.S., as immigration status and work permissions can make them more vulnerable to labor exploitation and discrimination. In addition, anti-migration policies that impact families' economic status and growth can significantly affect their privileges in the U.S. As a result, this research focused on the socioeconomic status of the research participants in the U.S. rather than their home country.

School enrollment. Participants must have at least one child or relative enrolled in K-12 public schools in Florida.

Language Acquisition. The primary objective was to conduct interviews with mothers with varying English proficiency levels and those whose children are classified as emergent multilingual. The complexities of language acquisition can present certain challenges. To gain a deeper understanding of immigrant families, I also interviewed mothers fluent in English but still categorized as emergent multilingual and whose multilingual children have been diagnosed with speech delays because they did not speak "proper" English. Additionally, I encountered situations where emergent multilingual children are fluent in English, yet their mothers face significant language barriers. I also interviewed mothers fluent in three languages but with limited English proficiency. Examining the complexities of language acquisition within emergent multilingual families is important.

Recruitment Screening Tool.

Inspired by Woodring et al. (2006), participants were selected based on three criteria.

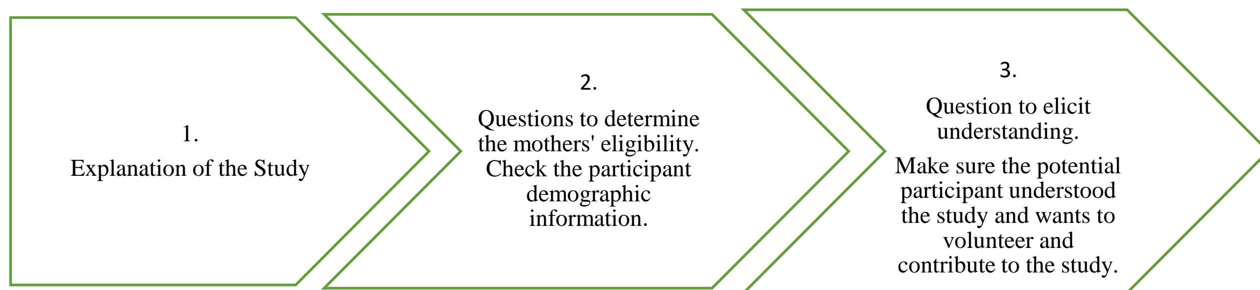


Figure 3: *Screening Tool*

In the initial phase of the screening process, I provided potential research participants with an explanation of the study's purpose. In step two, I asked a series of questions to collect data on demographics, language, ethnicity, educational service usage, and other pertinent research-related subjects. The third step involved confirming that the participant understood the nature of the study and obtaining their verbal consent to participate. I also confirmed they had access to a phone, computer/laptop, and internet for our online interview. One mother requested an in-person interview due to her limited access to technology and a computer. In line with a critical social justice framework, I conducted an in-person interview to ensure that technology did not prevent her from sharing her stories and experiences in schools.

Verbal consent. Two types of verbal consent were utilized in the research process. Firstly, before the interviews, verbal consent was used to obtain permission from research participants while respecting their migration status. Written consent was avoided to prevent intimidation or impact on the subject's willingness to participate. The verbal consent process was thoroughly explained to all participants in accordance with IRB guidelines, and their permission was obtained to record the conversation. Every participant agreed to the recording of the interview via Zoom, and the in-person interview was also audio recorded. The second verbal consent was obtained for using the research participants' artwork in this dissertation and future

works such as publications and conferences. Only one mother provided a signed consent form to use her and her children's photography. In addition, measures were taken to ensure privacy by blurring the picture.

Data Collection Process

Pre-Interview Preparation - Language as a Tool for Respect, Belonging, and Care. The study involved creating audio recordings in the mothers' chosen language, explaining the purpose of the study, and providing important information required by the IRB. These recordings were then shared via WhatsApp, allowing the mothers to listen at their own pace, ask questions, and confirm their participation while scheduling interviews at their convenience. These measures were particularly important when conducting digital multilingual interviews with communities who may feel unwelcome, unsafe, or fearful due to their immigration status. The language used in the recordings helped establish a connection with the mothers and build positive relationships with them. Once participation was confirmed, interviews were scheduled according to the mothers' availability and time constraints, with necessary adjustments made for mothers who participated while caring for their children or dropping them off at school. The methodology was adjusted to meet the realities of the mothers and ensure their participation.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Before conducting the interviews, a list of themes and semi-structured questions was created based on the critical theory paradigm, intersectionality, and research questions. The open-ended questions were carefully designed to ensure every mother's unique experiences were respected and valued. As a researcher conducting critical work, the focus was not only on the interview and data collection but also on creating a safe and comfortable environment for mothers to share their stories. This required avoiding a formal setting. To accomplish this, I strived to create an environment where the mothers felt welcome.

For example, before they entered the Zoom virtual meeting room, I chose popular songs from their home country so they could hear and feel welcomed and comfortable when they entered the virtual space. Furthermore, I tried to deconstruct the power dynamic between the researcher and the participants. This was accomplished by utilizing the CHE principles of Connectivity, Humanness, and Empathy (Brown & Brown, 2019; Brown & Danaher, 2019), where empathy and understanding were critical and highly valued during the data collection process.

Every interview was customized and personalized to fit the needs of each interviewee, with a duration of roughly 60-90 minutes. Although my initial plan was to conduct focus group interviews, I adjusted to the schedules of the mothers and held four paired interviews (including two Zoom follow-ups) with four mothers, in addition to nine individual interviews (with follow-ups through WhatsApp only). The interviews were conducted in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and through translanguaging, summing up to 13 interviews (totalizing 17h 23 formal audio-recorded interviews). It is important to emphasize that the Haitian mothers who volunteered to participate in this study had diverse immigration experiences and were proficient in multiple languages, in addition to their native language. As the researcher was not proficient in Haitian Creole, the mothers chose to participate and communicate in Portuguese, English, and sometimes in Spanish instead.

At the beginning of each interview, the mothers were provided with a brief explanation of the research study and the researcher's background, followed by a request for verbal consent. The researcher used translanguaging during the interviews to foster a connection and trust with the participants instead of having a professional Spanish translator. The language barrier was not a disadvantage but instead became an opportunity to deepen the connection between the researcher and the participants. Sometimes, the participants corrected the researcher, while other times, they

shared laughter and tears. The researcher respected the participants' limitations and differences, which led to a deconstruction of the power dynamic between the participants and the researcher. Lastly, the aim of conducting this multi-cultural and multi-ethnic study was to “have access to participants’ natural language and fully articulated views” (Pinto da Costa, 2021, p. 2) and demonstrate the importance of culturally sensitive qualitative research methodologies (Gonzales & Lincoln, 2021).

Arts-Based Research. Before conducting the interviews, the research participants were presented with examples of arts-based and asked to create their own pieces of art that expressed their experiences with communicating and engaging in their children's schools. The mothers were free to choose the style that best suited their artistic vision, including painting, coloring, photography, poetry, collage, or music. While some mothers opted not to participate in the arts-based activities or could not do so due to time constraints, others eagerly embraced the opportunity to create their own art pieces and even involved their children in the process. This allowed the children to express their own emotions and experiences about attending school in the U.S. and learning a new language.

Multilingual Data Collection. Throughout the interviews, the researcher diligently took notes. However, as a multilingual interviewer, there were moments when note-taking had to be temporarily halted to focus on the mothers' responses and create suitable follow-up questions. Additionally, the researcher was responsive to language differences and made an effort to actively listen to the participants and ensure effective communication. Once the interviews were completed, I wrote and/or audio-recorded more extensive field research notes. The interview digital recordings were converted into mp4 audio files and securely saved on the researcher's personal computer.

Analytic Memos. During data collection, I incorporated memos in my study. Memos helped me to develop my critical thinking and reflections about all the phases of the study. Mihas (2021) explains that "memos develop a researcher's conversation with the data and can serve as a precursor, a companion, or a follow-up to coding" (p. 244) while making the researcher reflect on how a specific quotation and transcript can teach about the research question that guides the study. Furthermore, a memo helps the researcher examine and reflect on the complex information shared by the participants and how they make meaning about their researchers' life experiences.

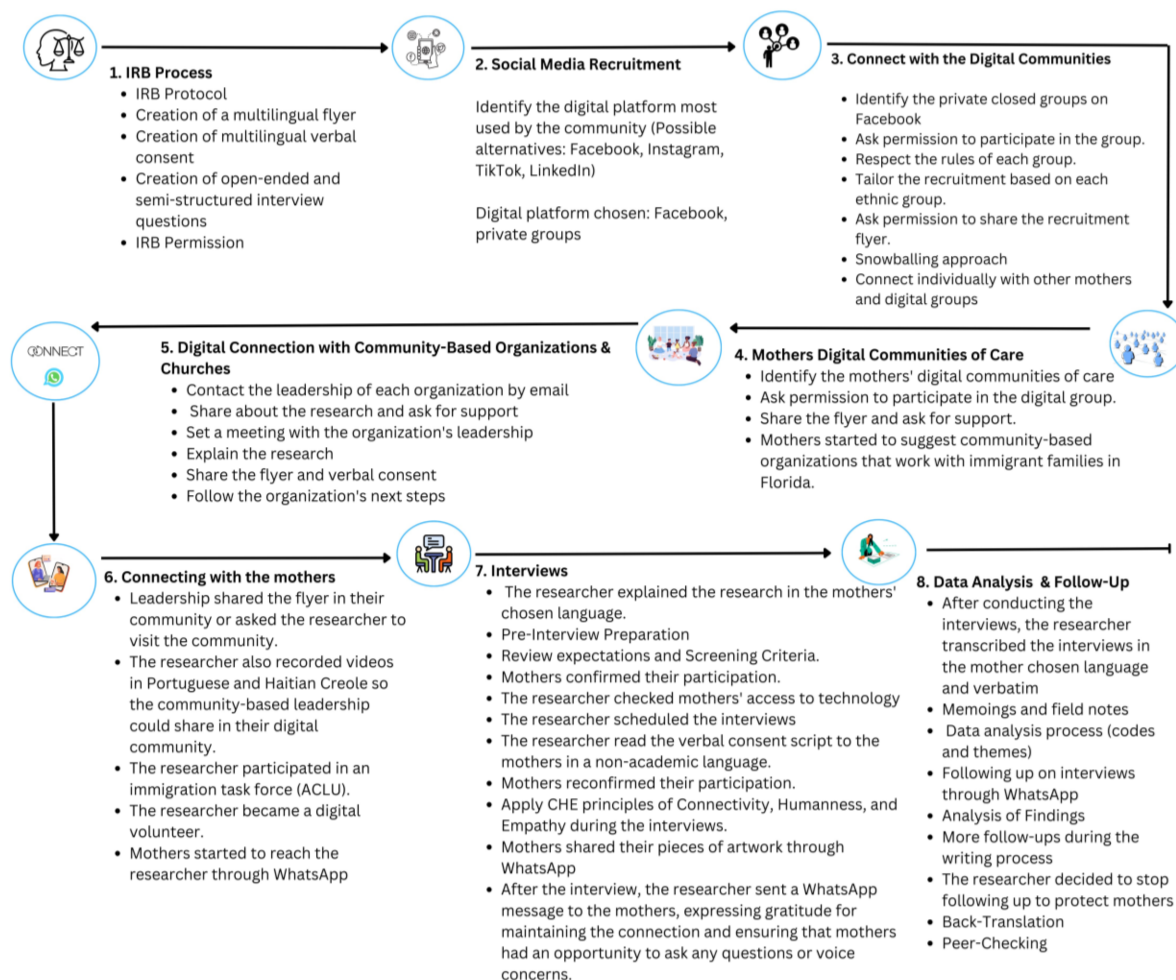


Figure 4: *Visual of the Recruitment and Interview Process*

Data Analysis Phases

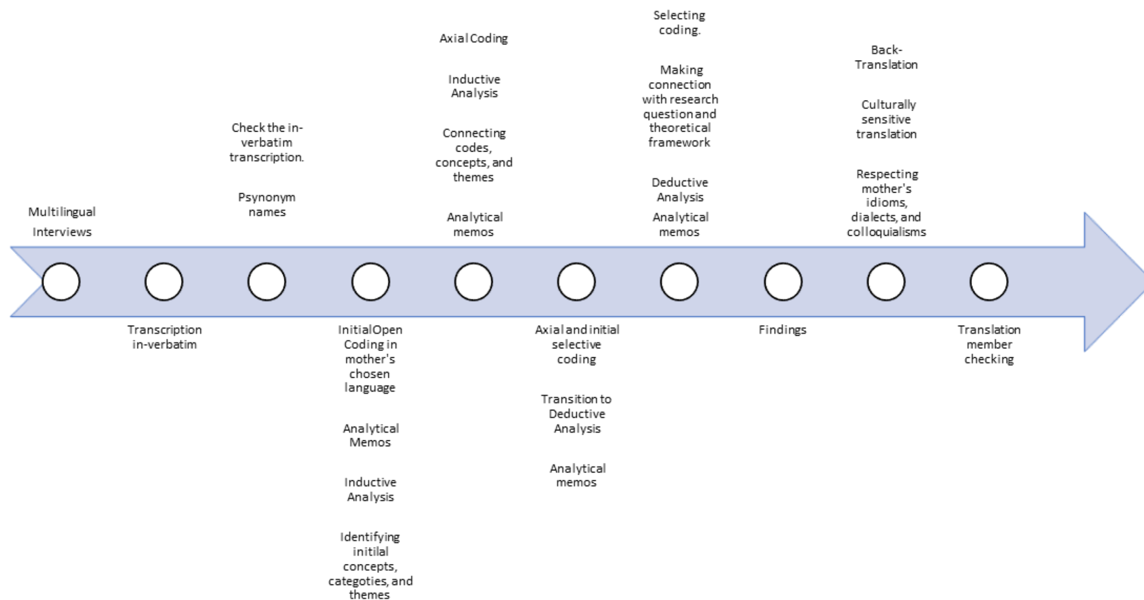


Figure 5: *Data Analysis Phases*

The data analysis comprised the following steps and phases:

Phase 1. I used *Happy Scribe*, a multilingual transcription platform, to transcribe the interviews. To maintain their anonymity, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant, including their children's names. The data were password-protected and exclusively accessible to the researcher.

Phase 2. I listened to and reviewed each interview transcript multiple times to ensure language accuracy during the transcription process. The multilingual and multi-ethnic transcription presented challenges, but the goal was to transcribe every word verbatim without mistranslations or omissions. This process took around 6 hours per interview, but it provided an opportunity to become immersed in the data and identify initial concepts, themes, and patterns. The primary objective during this phase was to ensure that transcriptions were accurately written in the participants' chosen languages and in-verbatim.

Consultation with native Spanish and Haitian Creole speakers was sought to provide linguistic and cultural accuracy in the transcripts. Member follow-up checking was conducted to ensure that the interpretation of the data aligned with the participants' perspectives. All of these measures were undertaken to guarantee that the research accurately represented the voices and experiences of the participants.

Phase 3 (Open coding). I delved deeper into analyzing the data. For thirteen days, I spent one day carefully listening to each interview and processing all the information, paying close attention to the subtle nuances such as breathing and pauses of the research participants. It was important for me to feel connected to the data. I listened and read the data multiple times, paying attention to and examining the breaths, pauses, and voice intonations. I firmly believe that all of these elements are important in critical qualitative research and should be considered when conducting research with underrepresented groups. Throughout this process, I aimed to uncover what my data was telling me without expectations. I started questioning myself: What concepts, themes, and patterns emerged? What themes did I initially overlook during the interview and during the phase 1 and 2 process? Additionally, I questioned what the research participants' breathing patterns, pauses, and voice intonations conveyed as data. As an emergent multilingual researcher focused on multilingualism, emotions, and well-being, the voice expressions during the data collection were important to me as a researcher, especially when working with families affected by migration, racism, mental health, and political trauma.

Phase 4 (Axial Coding). After listening to the interviews without the transcriptions, I took time to reflect on the data and memoing. I realized that reading and listening at the same time could cause me to miss important nuances of the data collected. Therefore, during phase 4, I only listened to each interview several times to identify new patterns and themes and connect the

mothers' experiences. The more I listened, the more I was able to connect their experiences and draw a connection between school policies, practices, and processes.

Phase 5 (Axial Coding). I began my official coding process by reading and thoroughly reviewing all of the interviews. To assist me in organizing the transcripts, I utilized the *Atlas.ti* digital platform. I then proceeded to code and connect various themes and patterns. This step was crucial to the data analysis as it allowed me to remain open to the concepts and insights my data provided regarding the social justice issues that occur daily in school settings.

Phase 6 (Selective Coding). Upon careful examination and evaluation of the interviews, I was able to establish a connection between the study's theoretical frameworks and research questions. Despite feeling overwhelmed by the abundance of data and my initial analysis, I created an Excel spreadsheet to categorize the primary concepts, themes, and codes. To enhance efficiency, I employed *Atlas.it* to color-coordinate each code and quote with its corresponding theme. Concurrently, I took meticulous notes and consistently linked my preliminary analysis to the theoretical framework and research questions. This approach to data management facilitated triangulation, validation of the study, and identification of patterns.

Coding Process

There are three types of coding in qualitative analysis: open, axial, and selective.

Table 6: *Coding Steps During the Study (Neuman, 2015)*

Step 1 **Open coding**	**Step 2** **Axial Coding**	**Step 3** **Selective Coding**
Locate themes during the initial coding process	It is the second step of coding.	Select cases and themes

Table 6: *(Continued)*

Look for central themes and key events.	The researcher focuses on the initial themes that emerged during the open coding phase.	Focus on major themes that guide the study.
Highlight those themes	Organize ideas and themes	Create categories, subcategories, and connect with examples
Connect with your theoretical framework and with the concepts in the literature review.	Connect categories and concepts. Create subcategories of themes.	
Create an initial list of themes.	Reflect on newly raised questions.	

Cross-Cultural Data Analysis, Translation & Validity. Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic studies present unique challenges requiring culturally sensitive approaches. Researchers need to first be aware of the cultural nuances of interaction and translation when working with linguistically and culturally diverse communities, including obtaining consent and crafting interview questions. Throughout the entire research process, from recruitment, conducting interviews, and taking field notes to transcribing and analyzing data, researchers need to remain mindful of the need to capture participants' idioms, dialects, and colloquialisms accurately. Gonzales and Lincoln (2021) emphasize the importance of respecting these cultural nuances throughout the research process while also considering the researcher's identity, biases, and positionality when interpreting and analyzing the data. It is vital in cross-cultural studies to ensure that the voice of the research participants is not lost during the data analysis and translation process. Meanwhile, the study findings also need to be accurate, accessible, and meaningful to a non-native audience.

It is important to note that cross-linguistic translation is not simply a word-for-word process. It is a difficult process and requires a thoughtful examination of the cultural context and

the diverse linguistic perspectives of the participants involved. Without a deep understanding of the context and culture of the research participants, data analysis and translation can be greatly affected, making cultural sensitivity a crucial aspect of the qualitative research process. Additionally, my personal values (axiology) and past experiences working with immigrant human trafficking victims and refugees have taught me that a mistranslation can have a severe impact on both an individual and their community - especially when working with underrepresented communities. Translation is not only words but also body language, oral culture, breathing, and voice expression. Based on these previous experiences, I made sure that I accurately analyzed the data and properly translated mothers' interviews.

In light of this, I made a conscious decision during the data analysis phase to code and analyze the data in the mother's chosen language rather than translating them into English beforehand. As a multilingual researcher and an "insider/outsider," it made more sense to me to analyze the mothers' language to better connect with their cultural background and appreciate the nuances sometimes lost in translation. It was also important for me to pay attention to the mothers' breathing, voice intonation, and breathing pace during the research and data analysis. These aspects are connected to the culture of the research participants and need to be considered when conducting cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research for a comprehensive understanding of the mothers' experiences, themes, and research findings.

I opted to back-translate the quotes at the end of the process once I had identified the specific quotes I wanted to use from each mother. A back-translation is the process of translating a message from a first language to a second language and then translating the second language to the first language to ensure the meaning is not lost (Brislin & Freimanis, 2001; Brislin, 1970). By taking these steps, I was able to guarantee that my data analysis was precise

and that I honored the voices and the unique cultural backgrounds of all of the mothers involved. As a final check, I conducted member verification with a native speaker to confirm that the translations accurately represented the mothers' voices without altering their intended meanings.

It is also worth noting that, owing to my personal linguistic and cultural background, I recorded all of my memos and field notes in my native language (Portuguese) and/or through translanguaging. Surprisingly, doing so seemed to help me better develop my thoughts as I listened, read, and analyzed the multilingual data collected in this study. As I wrote my dissertation, I also took the time to translate the mothers' interviews and my notes and analytical memos.

Gonzales and Lincoln (2021) give five suggestions to scholars working on decolonizing methodologies and research through a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic approach: (1) consider the translation and the translator, (2) make sure that the researcher understands the cultural traditions of the research participants, (3) listen to the perspectives of the local community, (4) include multilingual texts, and (5) make sure that the researcher ensures the accessibility of the publication which means the researcher will provide ways that the research participants have access and understand the final work.

As mentioned previously, I utilized various languages in this study. Nevertheless, to ensure that the findings were comprehensible, particularly to academic audiences or policymakers, I deliberately chose to translate the quotes into English. My objective was not to cater to English-only speakers, but to prevent any misinterpretation regarding the experiences and needs of mothers. After reflecting on my decision, I decided to use translanguaging in some quotes as well, to illustrate that translanguaging is not an improper form of communication, but rather a fluid and living process that enables linguistic and racial-ethnic minoritized communities

who live across multiple linguistic and cultural borders to communicate effectively in several languages and vocabularies simultaneously while preserving their full linguistic repertoire, ethnic and cultural identities. Multilingualism and translanguaging are intricate and nonlinear processes that facilitate the connection of multilingual communities with their historical backgrounds, identities, and communities. The original quotes of the mothers in Portuguese, Spanish, and English are available in Appendix A.

Moving forward, I plan to develop a strategy to share the research findings in the languages chosen by the mothers in a more accessible manner for the community. While I made the translation decision for the dissertation format, I intend to share the findings with the mothers and community organizations that provided valuable knowledge and support during this study. My aim is to share the findings in a non-academic language, and through other forms of accessible and inclusive communication, valuing the community's four communication domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). This approach will ensure that the study remains inclusive and grounded in the community. It will also enable mothers and community-based organizations to share the findings with their communities, families, public and private organizations, schools, ethnic churches, and policymakers.

Quality Criteria

As a Latinx researcher conducting a study with Latinx and Caribbean women, I made an effort to reflect on my biases and personal beliefs throughout the decision-making process, such as selecting the methodological design, recruitment strategies, interview questions, data collection, analysis, and finalizing the study. As a critical researcher who rejects positivist approaches, I acknowledge that there is no clear separation between research and qualitative inquiry (Galdas, 2017, p. 2). As an immigrant Latinx emergent multilingual woman of color, I

understand the importance of ensuring that this study remains transparent and critically reflexive, where I analyze not only the data but also my own preconceptions throughout the process of conducting, analyzing, and presenting the data.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a crucial ethical consideration in credible research. To demonstrate trust, I meticulously documented every study step, including data collection, participant recruitment, and data analysis. I kept memos and a trail to record all decisions and their reasoning. As I wrote, I reviewed these notes and reflected on how they related to the theoretical framework and research questions. I also followed up with research participants to ensure I understood their stories and collected all relevant information. However, I was mindful of validity issues that can arise in qualitative research, such as the expectation of finding a single "truth." Instead, I sought to capture varied and subjective perspectives to conduct the data analysis (Smith, 1984, p. 390; Angen, 2000).

To understand the mothers' experiences, I engaged with my research participants and used triangulation to collect data from multiple sources on the same topic. Peer debriefing was also essential for receiving constructive feedback and gaining new insights during the process of reflexivity, coding, and theme selection.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this study on immigration status, emotions, and political trauma, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and IRB course on social-behavioral-educational research. This certification is a requirement for researchers and students focusing on social and behavioral research. The training covered research misconduct, data management, authorship, peer review and mentoring, conflicts of interest, collaborative study,

and research with human subjects. As a researcher, I was mindful of my participants' experiences and emotions when sharing their stories and discussing sensitive topics that could cause harm or re-traumatization. As a researcher, I adhered to ethical practices by ensuring that my research participants fully understood the study in their native or chosen language before each interview. I also avoided any questions or approaches that could cause retraumatization or harm. Additionally, I emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could choose to stop their participation at any time.

Data Management

I ensured the secure storage of all the data in my personal computer, safeguarded by a password. Access was limited to only myself, and the files were not disclosed to anyone except my dissertation committee. In compliance with the IRB guidelines, the data will be permanently deleted after five years.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the various methodological decisions I undertook during this study. It includes an overview of the initial approaches, methodological challenges, and modifications made while engaging with the community. I have also highlighted technology's crucial role in facilitating significant digital community-based qualitative research and the importance of adapting to the community's needs and contemporary forms of communication and engagement. Furthermore, I have provided a comprehensive account of the recruitment and interview process, the back translation practices, and techniques for analyzing the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

I think que as escolas should be more humane. I still think that human beings are still the transformação of many things in this world. (*Janaina, Brazil)*

This chapter presents the findings from the study of thirteen mothers' experiences with educators in various roles (i.e., school administrator, teacher, counselor, translator, secretary, bus driver) regarding how their children were being educated. The purpose of this study was to examine how mothers in Florida, with various levels of English proficiency, immigration statuses (i.e., undocumented, asylum seekers, refugees, international students, and mixed migration status), and limited financial resources attempted to steward their children through the U.S. educational system. The research question was: *How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida?* The sub-level question was: *How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?*

Historical Context

To comprehend the themes and findings of this study, it is important to consider the historical, economic, and sociopolitical context in which the mothers were interviewed. The data was collected during the spring and summer of 2022, following the COVID-19 pandemic, when public schools had reopened for in-person classes, and families had access to the COVID-19 vaccine. The study's themes and findings reflect the experiences of families with children in K-12 public schools in Florida before, during, and after the initial phase-out of the global pandemic, as well as the process of transitioning back to in-person school activities.

Themes and Findings

I culled six prominent themes from the data: *Theme 1: Normalization of microaggressions.* Normalized everyday microaggressions contributed to diverse forms of exclusion, violence, and bullying in schools and were detrimental to the well-being of the mothers, students, and their broader families. *Theme 2: Inconsistent and superficial communication.* Educators in Florida's K-12 public school system inconsistently communicated with mothers and their children who are not fluent in standard English in all four communication domains: writing, reading, listening, and speaking. *Theme 3: Feeling invisible.* The mothers expressed feeling as if they were invisible to educators in their children's schools who did not share their ethnic group affiliation, language, or culture and seemingly perceived their cultural and linguistic practices as deficits rather than assets to the school and their community. *Theme 4: Digital literacy divide*. Mothers reported that K-12 public schools rely on technology for parental communication, which neglects emerging multilingual parental engagement, their sense of belonging, and students' academic development. *Theme 5: Xenophobic Inspired Immobility*: School policies, practices, and processes promoted English-Only and anti-immigration ideologies that influenced immigrant families' mobility (i.e., access to housing) and school choice. *Theme 6: Underrepresentation aiding students' under-development.* Parents perceived the lack of linguistic and racial-ethnic representation in the curriculum and instruction negatively affected their children's cognitive and socioemotional development, school-parent-family relationships, and parental engagement.

Based on the connections among these six themes, two major findings emerged:

Finding 1. Mothers experienced interactions with school personnel and curriculum practices that normalize a culture of exclusion and microaggressions toward immigrant children and families of linguistic and ethnic-racial diversity.

Finding 2. Discontinuous and superficial communication from school personnel influenced mothers' dis/engagement, mobility, and school choice.

The Normalization of Microaggressions

Mothers reported that their children's schools normalize linguistic and ethnic-racial microaggressions, which hinder the engagement of emerging multilingual immigrant parents and influence their children's academic development, well-being, and access to equitable education. For example, Maria (Venezuela), a mother of an 8-year-old boy diagnosed with autism spectrum and visual impairment, discussed how Latinx parents and students without fluency in English are silenced by school officials. According to her,

> I feel that many times, *nosotros* Latinos are hidden around the corner. Where I live, we are often the majority, but they do not hear us. *Necesitamos* to be heard as well. I wish schools had someone who could speak *Español* since most students are Latinos. *No quiero un trato especial, pero* I would like someone to explain things to us so that we can understand – *sobre todo en matemáticas y traducción de documentos importantes. Mi hijo y yo nos esforzamos por aprender inglés, pero no es algo que podamos aprender rápidamente*. His brain works differently. If it is difficult for me, it is also difficult *para un niño*.

Maria highlighted how emerging multilingual immigrant parents and children are neglected in public schools and treated as second-class citizens.

Despite their daily efforts to engage with and participate in their children's school community, all mothers reported feeling overlooked, invisible, and not having their voices heard and respected when asking for information and support. They shared their attempts to communicate with schools using their full linguistic repertoire assets through translanguaging and digital translators, but their attempts were ineffective. Their experiences echo what was found in studies wherein Latinx mothers were subjected to everyday symbolic and institutionalized violence in schools (Cioè-Peña, 2020, 2022; Monzó, 2013). Salas's (2004) findings revealed that mothers' exclusion, isolation, and invisibility are signs of social control and discrimination in schools that impose English dominance and perpetuate white middle-class power dynamics that restrict parental involvement and deny emerging multilingual immigrant mothers' fundamental human rights such as the right to speak and be heard. Similarly, Alexander (2018) revealed that this discrimination, invisibility, and control of mothers' involvement in their children's schools is also a form of white supremacy that creates a dichotomy between "good motherhood" and "bad motherhood" based on the intersection of gender, citizenship, and migration status. Maria and Nadage, as well as other mothers, discussed the challenges that immigrant mothers face raising children who are emerging multilingual with visible and invisible disabilities. Moreover, they described everyday microaggressions they encountered while seeking information and support from schools. Nadage, a mother from Haiti with undocumented immigration status, gave an example of these challenges. She shared

> *Eu entrei aqui pela fronteira* with all my three daughters on foot and my 12-year-old daughter with autism *nas minhas costas*. Today, we are here without the papers. I wished the school could have someone to help more immigrants, more like social services. I can't speak well if I don't have someone that speaks Creole in the school. My girls, who are

também aprendendo Inglês, had to go to the school with me to help me *comunicar* and enroll my daughter with autism at school. It took *três* months. Here, the social service is disconnected from the *escolas*. When immigrants like me get here, they barely have any *dinheiro*. They can't rent a *casa*. I am not allowed to work. They should help when a *mãe* has a child with disabilities. Sometimes, I asked the school if they knew of an organization that could help immigrant children with *autismo*. They told me to go to a place, but when I arrived there, nobody knew anything about it. *As escolas* should help children who don't have papers so they can go to college when they finish school. You cannot do anything if you don't have the papers here. You can't go to college when you finish studying.

Maria and Nadege shed light on the hidden discrimination that undocumented and asylum-seeker mothers and children face in the public education system and how they are particularly invisible and vulnerable due to the intersection of their immigration status, gender, race, language barriers, and their children's disabilities (Cioè-Peña, 2020, 2022). Nadage's and Maria's narratives are consistent with previous studies on invisibility, microaggressions, and the involvement of undocumented and asylum-seeker parents and children in schools (Russell & Rivalora, 2023; Peterson et al., 2017; Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalles, 2012). In some instances, schools are the only place where undocumented mothers feel safe enough to ask questions and support, especially after the Florida Senate (2023) approved the CS/CS/SB 1718: Immigration policy, which puts undocumented families at greater risk of detention, deportation, and family separation.

Further, both excerpts demonstrate how schools normalize microaggressions by accepting staff apathy toward mothers when they ask questions or seek guidance, inconsistent and

superficial communication, and unrealistic citizenship expectations due to the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* enacted in 1974 and the *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) federal policies, which prohibits school officials from asking about the citizenship of children and parents, in order to protect the privacy and immigration status of students. According to Lavín & Francis (2022) and Padía et al. (2021), both policies protect the identities of immigrant families; however, these policies also promote a culture of neutrality and silence in schools, which makes undocumented families invisible and disregards their unique systemic challenges and needs. It also hinders mothers' access to basic educational information and resources for their children, as well as their support from school personnel.

According to the thirteen mothers' observations, microaggression within schools has been normalized, which supports the work of Essed (1991) about *everyday racism*, as well as Steketee et al. (2021) and other scholars who have identified three types of daily microaggressions toward emerging multilingual immigrant families within K-12 public schools. They are raciolinguistic (Williams, 2020), nativist (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), and immigrant-origin (Gold, 2017) microaggressions which impose dominant cultural norms (white, monolingual, patriarchal, middle-class, and U.S. citizen) and neglect the voices and needs of minoritized communities of color in schools. Lopez, an emerging multilingual immigrant mother from the Dominican Republic, created an artwork to convey her experience at her son's school.

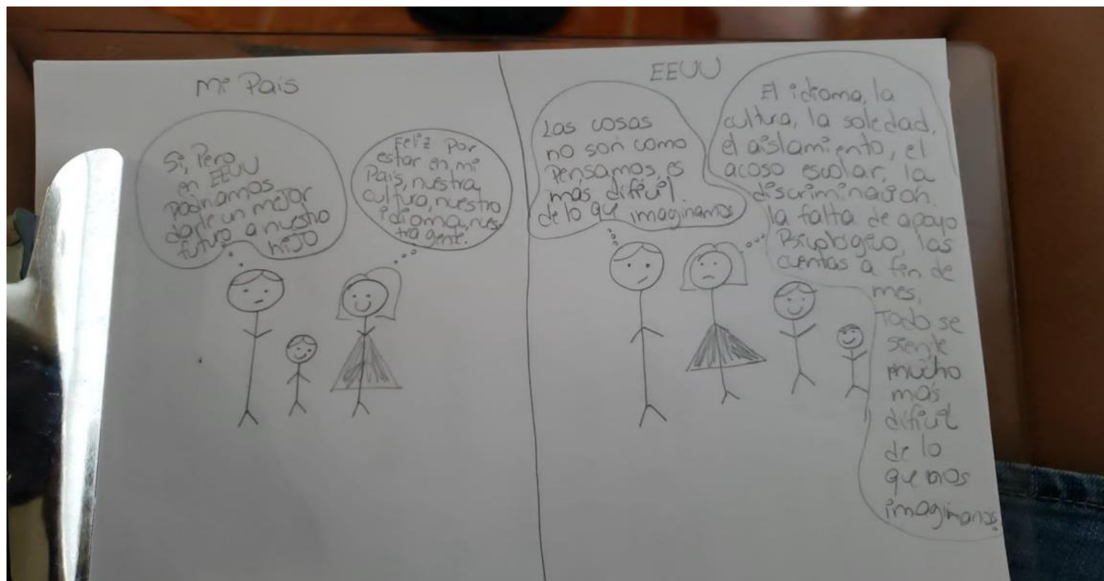


Figure 6: *Lopez's artwork (Dominican Republic)*

Art translanguaging translation (vocabulary in Portuguese, English, and Spanish):

In my country -

Husband: *Sim,* but in the U.S., we would give a better *futuro* to our *niños*.

Lopez: Happy to be in my country, our *cultura*, our language, our people.

In the U.S.:

Husband: Things aren't as we expected. It is more *difícil* than we imagined.

Lopez: The language, *a cultura*, *solidão*, isolation, school neglect, *discriminação,* lack of psychological support, and bills at the end of the month. Everything feels more *difícil* than we imagined.

In her artwork, Lopez depicted the impact of acculturation, school discrimination, isolation, and invisibility on her family's well-being. Lopez further delved into these themes and their links with everyday microaggressions. She stated:

> *Mi hijo tuvo problemas con el maestro*. He complained that the teacher was very rude to him. I said to my son: "Be strong. Be a man. Just obey. Don't get in any trouble." In this

system, we hear the same thing over and over. *Necesitamos ser fuertes*; we need to move forward. Like so many others, you get so sucked into that character that you can't even remember the feelings around you. Here in the U.S., your heart becomes cold. *Mi hijo* would constantly cry when he came home from *escuela*. There was a day when I couldn't take it anymore, and I wrote to the *maestro.* The teacher told me that the problem was *mi hijo*. I replied to the teacher and told him that I was going to schedule an appointment with the *consejero*. After multiple unsuccessful attempts to contact the counseling department, I opted to visit *la escuela en persona*. That day, I discovered that the teacher was doing the same thing with other Latino students. We came home, my husband and I, a little defeated because this person [the teacher] was spending six hours with my child every day. This made me feel that I failed with my son. *Mi hijo tenía razón, pero no lo escuché*. This country is changing you and *tu corazón*. Little by little, you get so used to being mistreated. Sometimes we tell ourselves: "Oh, whatever! Just ignore it. We must put up with it because we are immigrants."

Lopez' narrative demonstrated how the normalization of microaggressions, teachers' deficit thinking, and the patriarchal and nativist politics of boyhood/manhood embedded in U.S. culture and education that promote gendered norms through messages such as "*be strong, be a man, just obey, be quiet, don't complain"* influence immigrant parents and children of color, impacting not only family connection but also mothers' perception of "good parent" and creating a sense of guilt and failure through the intersection of gender, class, and migration (Pérez, 2014).

The mothers' experiences in this study regarding deficit thinking, ethnic and gendered stereotypes, insults, assaults, and invalidation align with the findings of Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalles (2012). Their research revealed that parental microaggressions can lead to immigrant

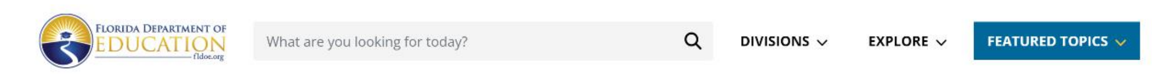
children living in vulnerability, such as being undocumented, missing more school due to parental distrust of school personnel, fear of deportation, and separation of family members.

Institutional Policy, Microaggressions & Parental Training. Eleven mothers reported that schools fail to provide parental mentorship to emerging multilingual immigrant parents. These issues are particularly prevalent for families who have experienced digital exclusion in schools, discrimination due to race, ethnicity, language, or dis/abilities, and those who have undergone political or socioemotional trauma because of their immigration status. During the interviews, the mothers pointed out the link between everyday microaggressions and educational policies. They specifically educated me about *Rule 6A.6-0904*, *Florida's Equal Access to Appropriate Instruction for English Language Learners*, which has been in place since 2009. This policy requires that

> (a) **Parental involvement and participation** in limited English Language Learners' educational programming and academic achievement **shall be promoted**.
>
> (2) **Parents shall be provided training and orientation regarding program monitoring procedures and involvement procedures available to parents of English Language Learners.**
>
> (c) **Parents shall be notified in writing** of the student's initial membership in an assigned program. **Notification shall be in the language that the parent understands** unless clearly not feasible. (Florida's Rule 6A.6-0904, 7)

The mothers who educated me about parental involvement policies also informed me of the Department of Education's (2023) guidelines for family and community engagement (as shown in the image below). These guidelines encourage parents to become more involved in their children's education. However, the mothers pointed out that the policies and recommendations

set by the State do not align with the schools' processes and procedures. This creates a gap between theory and reality, leading to a disconnection between the school system, children, families, and the community. This finding aligns with Burgess and Lowe's (2022) study on the disconnect between rhetoric, educational policies, and actual practices in schools. This gap has significant impacts on both schools and families, particularly when it comes to supporting minoritized students. Their study shows that this systemic disconnection hinders teachers' efforts to support their students and reinforces deficit discourses while disregarding the funds of knowledge and epistemologies of students and their families.



FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Message to Families

When schools work together with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. The Florida Department of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by schools, families and the community during the entire period a child spends in school.

The following are several suggestions of the many ways families may be involved with their child's education:

- Contact your child's teacher early in the school year and maintain communication throughout the school year.
- Participate in parent/teacher conferences.
- Ask the teacher what your child is learning and how you can support this at home.
- Talk with your child daily about homework, classroom activities and events.
- Learn about school policies and expectations so you can help your child understand them.
- Make efforts to stay informed of school and classroom events.
- Model behaviors and attitudes you expect from your child.
- Encourage and nurture your child's creativity.
- Be proactive in making the school aware of your support for your child's education.
- Talk with your employer about flex time so you can participate in school activities.
- Establish a daily family routine.
- Monitor out of school activities.
- Model the value of learning, self-discipline and hard work.
- Express high, but realistic expectations for achievement.
- Encourage your child's development/progress in school.
- Encourage reading, writing and discussions among family members.
- Be positive when talking with your child about school related activities.

Figure 7: *Florida's Department of Education (2023) guidance. Family, Community Engagement*

In this study, all the mothers requested parental training. However, only Lucia (from Venezuela), who was chosen through a lottery to attend a School Choice program in a

predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood, received the necessary support. Twelve other mothers who lived in Black and Brown low-income neighborhoods with schools that had poor ratings reported that they did not receive any training. They felt like they were bothering school officials when they sought guidance on policies and procedures and the translation of documents. For instance, Margarita (from Colombia) shared

> They [schools] are not prepared to interact with *las familias*, and a lack of translator limits their ability to understand us. For example, I feel a little *frustrada* because the method that I have been taught in Colombia is totally different from the methods that they use here. I was told that my daughter in second grade would take an ESOL test, but I never found out when she would take it. I discovered a few months later that she took the test, but no one from the school contacted me. Today she is struggling in reading and writing. I feel frustrated because I am trying to help her, but can't read in English. Sometimes I spend the entire afternoon and night helping her in one homework. I try to translate and watch videos on YouTube. I feel frustrated because since I don't know the sounds of the words, I don't know how to say them well. I also feel that there is *una desconexión entre mi hija y la maestra*. They [school officials] should study what are the needs of parents - non-English speaking parents. If they study or listen to us [parents], they will clearly see: "These are our needs as parents, and these are our limitations," *pero no hay comunicación*.

Here, Margarita highlighted the absence of communication, parental training, and written or verbal notifications for emerging multilingual parents regarding their children's education, indicating a gap between policies and the actual experiences of mothers in schools. Her experience is similar to that of other mothers in the study, as well as Smith et al.'s (2008) study,

which explains that when schools fail to provide general guidance and information to emerging multilingual parents, it can lead to confusion for both parents and children, as well as reluctance on the part of parents to ask questions.

Furthermore, the mothers claimed that certain important information was withheld, including vaccination requirements for non-U.S.-born students during school enrollment, educational programs and services available for emerging multilingual students with or without disabilities, an explanation of the importance of GPA for college and scholarship applications, the long-term effects of standardized testing on students, ESOL programs and assessments, technologies utilized at school to improve parental-teacher communication, information about parenting councils, policies for parent volunteering (especially for undocumented parents who want to volunteer but are afraid of background checking and deportation), access to multilingual and culturally informed counseling and trauma-informed professionals, access to translators/interpreters, document translation, and various special programs such as honors, STEM, and arts-based education available in K-12 public schools.

Newcomer mothers reported difficulty understanding the U.S. educational system, unlike English-dominant or non-newcomer immigrant parents. Additionally, mothers have expressed worry that teachers and school administrators assume that immigrant parents are well-versed in these policies and procedures, which can create the impression that they are uninterested and lack motivation regarding their children's academic success. These expectations can ultimately impact parental involvement and children's access to information and education in the short and long term. For instance, Anair (Brazil) stated

> I always feel in the dark about my daughter's education. *Aqui você não recebe nenhum feedback*. I have no idea what my child is seeing or learning in school. I don't know

anything about what is happening. I don't have contact with the students, the teachers, or other parents. In my opinion, parents' involvement in their children's schools is *muito importante*. I have already been to the school. *Eu pedi para falar com a professora* because I want to know how my daughter is doing, but I have not heard from them.

Ana (Brazil) shared a similar experience where she informed the principal about her 9-year-old daughter's need for additional support in the English language. Her daughter was illiterate in the four communication domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Despite expressing her concerns, the school principal placed her daughter in a higher grade without considering her needs. Ana shared her experience through artwork and an excerpt (see below).

Figure 8: *Ana's artwork attempting to navigate her daughter's school (Brazil)*

He [the principal] told me not to worry about it since *Português é muito parecido com o espanhol*, and the school was used to receive immigrant children. However, two months

> later, in a parental meeting, I told the teacher that my daughter was illiterate in English. The teacher was so embarrassed. She apologized and told me: "What? How did anyone tell me that? It's for this reason that she doesn't speak in class. I thought she was quiet." With the help of my husband, who was my translator, I replied to her: “Of course! She is quiet because she does not speak and understand English.” However, I find my daughter's story very interesting. Five years ago, she did not know a word of *Inglês*. Today, she finished her school year in the top 10 finalists in the national robotics championship. *Essa conquista é 100% mérito dela e não da escola*. By relying on her math skills and minimal English proficiency, she proved to herself that she would succeed *nos Estados Unidos*.

The excerpts and artwork above demonstrate how multilingual mothers and their children who are unfamiliar with the education system in Florida's public schools are often neglected. This is especially true as mothers and children navigate an English-Only system that places a high value on English proficiency, standardized tests, and grades, making it difficult for emerging multilingual parents to engage effectively with their children's education. Moreover, Ana's statement emphasizes how negative stereotypes about quiet students “can be misinterpreted as a lack of understanding, independent thinking, and low intelligence” (Yamamoto & Li, 2012, p.5). This deficit thinking towards culturally and linguistically diverse children and parents is a form of ethnic discrimination that favors English-dominant, more communicative, and assertive students and parents as intelligent and competent. Furthermore, it is often assumed that non-English dominant children who are quiet in the classroom or parents who are quiet at parental meetings and school events are passive, lazy, and unintelligent.

Invisibility and Exclusion during Parental Meetings. Mothers reported their challenges in being proactive, inquiring, and engaged during teacher-parent meetings. Based on their experiences,

school meetings were found to be unwelcoming and not accommodating to parents who are not fully fluent in English and unfamiliar with the school's culture. The materials, paperwork, and explanations provided were exclusively in English, without any translations available. One specific example was shared by Ana (Brazil)

> *O grande problema* is when you have to go to a meeting, you don't understand anything. Then, you are there just looking. You don't know what they are talking about. They could translate or give us a copy of the slides so we can translate them in advance. If all the school policies and rules are written for us, it will significantly help us. Because when we try to access the school's webpage, the information is not there. If we had this information in our hands, this would help us immensely! Especially the end of the year meetings because they explain the importance of GPAs and points to going to college. Make some material for me, please! *Escolas*, please make a little folder for *nosotros*!

This study found that Ana and other mothers had similar experiences. They felt excluded during school meetings and events and were unable to access resources available to English-speaking parents. They also tried to access the school's website and other digital communication platforms used by the school but were unable to find the information they needed. In line with mothers' experiences, Cline & Necochea's (2001) noted that "Latino parents are perhaps among one of the most excluded groups from any significant involvement in schools" (p. 111). This is especially true for parents who are not fully fluent in English, as their views are often not taken seriously, and most teachers are white and monolingual, who are unaware of the challenges faced by emerging multilingual immigrant families from the Global South. These daily instances of raciolinguistic microaggressions and institutional barriers limit parents' access to information,

enforce acculturation and assimilation, and widen the "opportunity gap" between English-dominant parents and emerging multilingual parents. Similarly, Guo's (2010) study found that power inequality, inconsistent communication, mismatched expectations between parents and teachers, and cultural differences blamed by teachers were barriers for parents to engage in parental meetings.

Parent Volunteering, Raciolinguistic & Immigrant-Origin Discrimination. Mothers reported that despite their efforts to volunteer at their children's school and gain a better understanding of school policies, they were turned away by teachers who perceived them as "problems" due to their limited English proficiency. Ana (Brazil) shared her unsuccessful experience attempting to volunteer and was asked to leave by a teacher after only 30 minutes due to her language barrier. She stated

> I felt ignorant. I felt guilty and extremely unhappy. After that, I did not have the condition to call the school anymore or pick my daughter up earlier if needed. They don't offer any channel for those who don't speak English, do you understand? Nothing, absolutely nothing. I started running away from *da escola*. When it was time to pick my daughter up, I used to *estacionar o carro* far away, so nobody could see me.

Mothers' narratives revealed that everyday hidden raciolinguistic and ethnic microaggressions practices in schools are often fueled by apathy, biases, and a lack of patience when listening to non-English dominant parents. These negative beliefs and behaviors can shame and perpetuate harmful stereotypes about Latinx and Caribbean immigrant mothers, children, and their extended families, such as depicting Latinx mothers as a problem, outsiders, irresponsible, uneducated, uncaring, and lazy (Manzo & Deeb-Bossa, 2018; Romero, 2011; Villenas, 1996). The perpetuation of these stereotypes surrounding emerging multilingual immigrant mothers not only

pathologizes their racial-ethnic features, culture, and language but also associates their social identities and phenotypes with illegality, indolence, and unintelligence. Villenas (2001) highlights that the intersection of race, gender, and class cannot be dismissed, as it reflects "the racialization of patriarchy and capitalism" (p.10) embedded in schools that target racialized and gendered bodies, particularly mothers of color from the Global South who have recently immigrated and are experiencing assimilation, cultural and raciolinguistic discrimination, and exclusion.

Exclusion of Undocumented & Unauthorized Immigrant Parents. Mothers have expressed concerns about the obstacles undocumented and unauthorized families face due to microaggressions and superficial communication with teachers, school leaders, and counselors. These families may fear incarceration, deportation, and family separation. The mothers highlighted that parents may not feel comfortable seeking assistance because schools do not provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for immigrant families in vulnerability due to their immigration status (Dreby, 2015; Lad & Braganza, 2013), particularly considering Trump's and DeSantis' anti-immigration and nativist rhetoric and actions attempting to deport and deny undocumented families access to education.

According to the mothers, undocumented and even asylum-seeker parents face significant challenges participating in their children's school activities due to mandatory background checks and other anti-migration systemic challenges. During the interview, Maria (Venezuela) shared her personal experiences and insights regarding asylum-seeking families currently residing in the U.S. She explained that these families face many systemic unknown challenges that are similar to those faced by undocumented families while waiting for their immigration process to be completed (if they get completed). For instance, parents may lack permission to work, rent a

house, or access healthcare for their children if they do not have a social security number. Moreover, children and parents are also vulnerable to deportation and family separation if they do not meet the white nativist standards of a "good immigrant." As per Maria's statement, the report by Edyburn & Meek (2021) has highlighted that asylum policies might have an adverse impact on children's academic achievements (p.25). Additionally, a study conducted by Ee & Gándara (2020) has found that anti-migration policies can severely affect students in schools, leading to their fear of deportation, absenteeism, emotional distress, and bullying. Explaining some of the challenges faced by undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugee families, Ophelie (Haiti) shared

> Let me explain because each of them [undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugee immigrant parents] has different problems and issues. You must be able to put yourself in their shoes to understand them because they encountered several challenges during their journey to the *Estados Unidos*. Some of them have been raped, and some of them got hurt by others during their trip. When they arrived in the United States, some of them were put in jail. Some mothers were seven, five, and six months pregnant. They don't see any doctors, and some of them are homeless. They came *em um período crítico* when so many people lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

Ophelie and other mothers discussed the systemic challenges immigrant parents in vulnerability due to their immigration status face in schools, migration traumas and fears, and the need for school leaders, teachers, and counselors to demonstrate empathy to emergent multilingual undocumented, asylum-seekers, and refugee families. Children and parents in vulnerability due to their immigration status face unique socioeconomic and emotional challenges that are not always apparent to educators. As a result, their experiences are frequently ignored by systems

that don't care about them, especially when parents fear participating in schools due to the need to protect themselves and their children. The mothers highlighted that microaggressions and racism take many forms in schools, including avoiding communication, not explaining families' rights, and excluding and denying their existence. This invisibility and exclusion are forms of colorblind racism that reject to see how immigration policies and school practices and processes affect undocumented parental engagement (and other immigrant parents in vulnerability) and students' academic development, well-being, and opportunities.

According to the Migration Policy Institute's report (2019), Florida has 772,000 unauthorized noncitizen residents, including 60,000 children and youth under 16. The MPI also found that 8,000 undocumented children between 3 and 17 are not officially enrolled in Florida's public schools, making up 12% of the undocumented population. It is evident from the report that undocumented parents are concerned about enrolling their children in public schools due to a lack of trust in the educational system. Abrego and Schmalzbauer (2018) examine the relationship between illegality, space, and how undocumented mothers and their children navigate their daily lives in the U.S. The researchers suggest that discrimination and anti-migration policies, practices, and processes restrict the life opportunities of undocumented families. Since mothers do not have their official immigration documents, the U.S. system deprives them of navigating social, economic, and patriarchal structures, deciding where and how they will live, and what type of services and education programs their children will have access to contributing to their exclusion, invisibility, criminalization, and dehumanization (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012).

Challenging Microaggression & Digital Communities of Care as a Political Act and Resistance. According to mothers' experiences, schools fail to recognize the contributions and

efforts made by emerging multilingual immigrant mothers to navigate the U.S. educational system and provide support for their children's education through their "motherhood capital" (Lo, 2016) and *mujeres pedagogies* (Cervantes-Soon & Turner, 2017). A key theme of the interviews was the significance of mothers' funds of knowledge assets in navigating schools in the U.S. In addition, they highlighted the importance of community connection, *familialismo*, acts of *carinho* (care, love, affection, and sensitivity), and partnership among schools, parents, and communities (Lomeli, 2023).

Moreover, mothers stressed that students' progress should be assessed holistically rather than just based on academic performance, English proficiency, test assessment, and scores, which are often the focus of U.S. neoliberal culture, which promotes individualism and competitiveness. In her artwork, Isabel (Venezuela) highlighted her experience in her daughters' school and the importance of family and community connection.

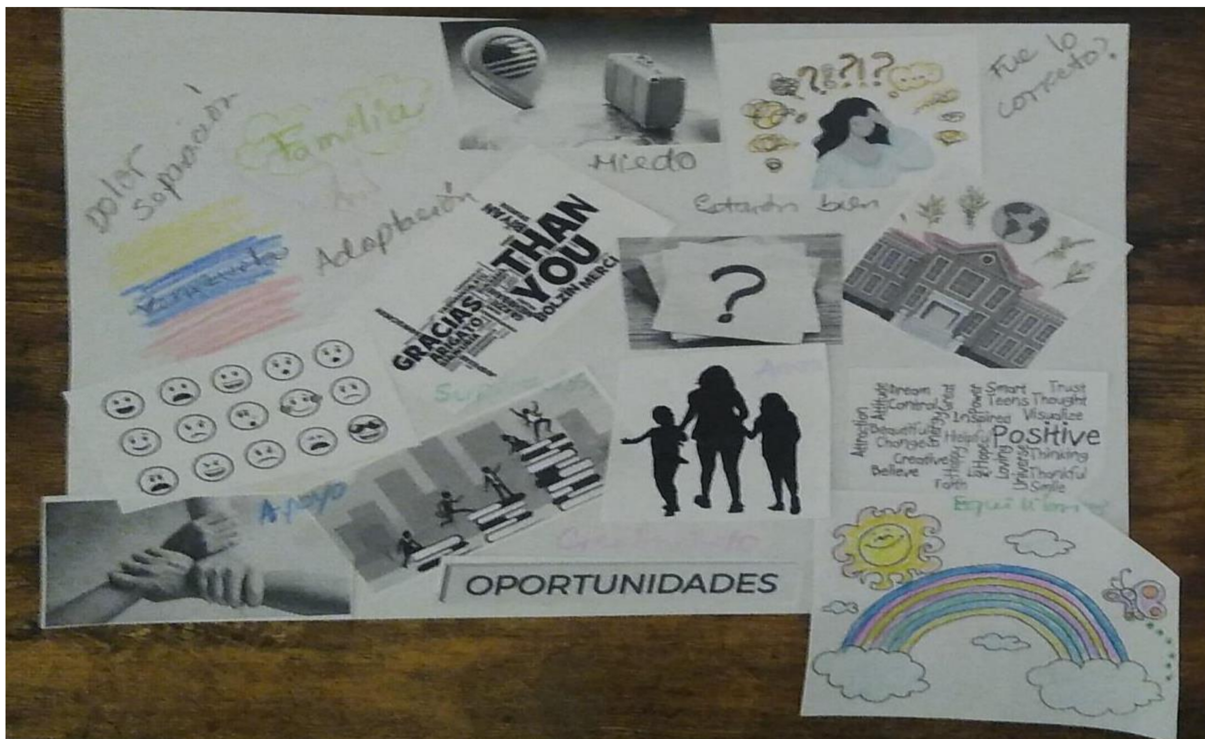


Figure 9: *Isabel's artwork (Venezuela)*

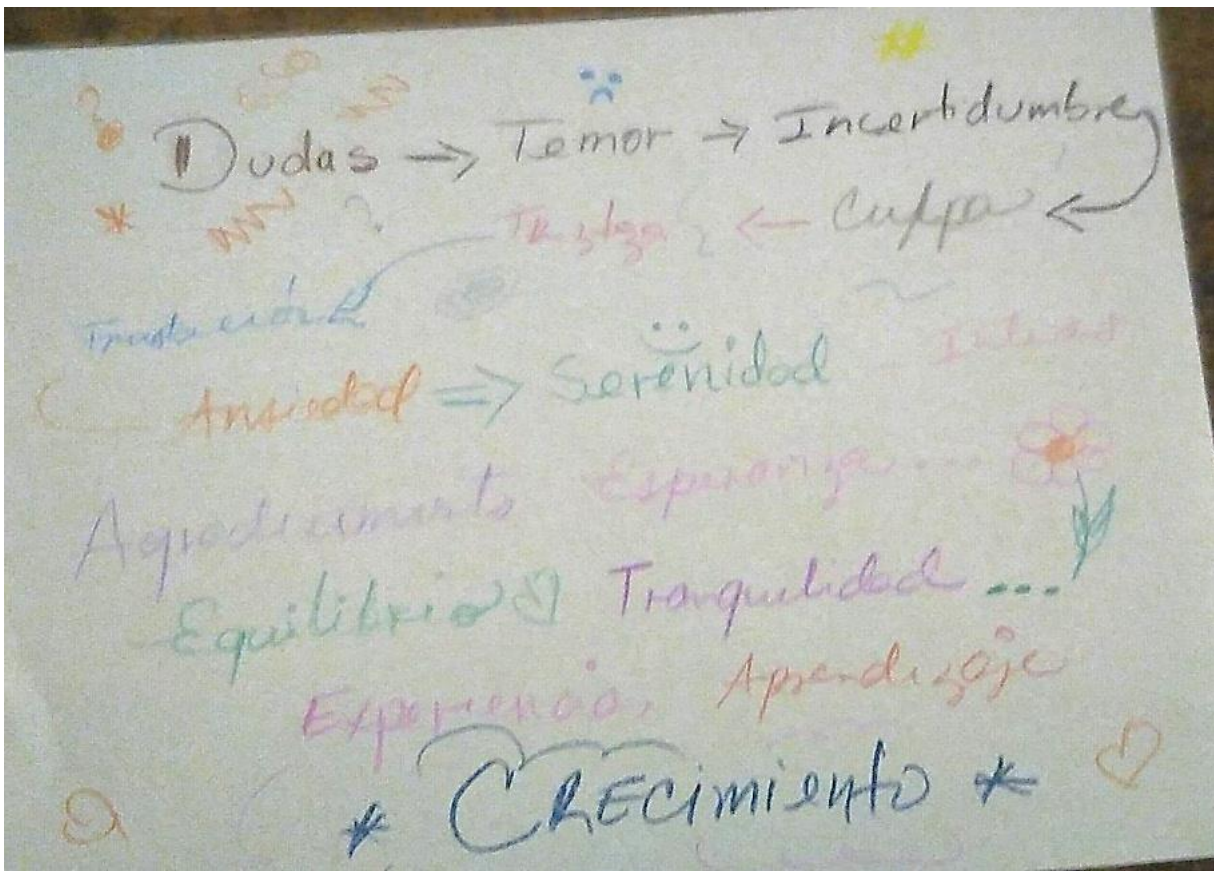


Figure 10: *Isabel's artwork (Venezuela)*

Translanguaging translation (vocabulary in English & Portuguese):

Dor, família separation, deportation, adaptar, fear, *oportunidades*, study well. Was it [migrate to the U.S.] correct? *Oportunidades*, support.

Doubt - *Medo* - Uncertainty – Guilt - Sadness - Frustration- Anxiety - Serenity - Thankful - *Esperança* - Balance - Tranquility - *Experiência* - Learning - Growth

Isabel's artwork delves into the emotional conflicts and experiences that mothers face in their role as caregivers while also expressing her hopes to provide her daughters with educational opportunities and a fulfilling life in the U.S. Through her artwork, Isabel emphasized the

significance of family and community bond in overcoming systemic challenges and discrimination within the school system.

During the recruitment process and interviews, I was surprised that mothers found a strategy and coping mechanism to respond to schools' deficit framing, microaggressions, individualism, isolation, and invisibility. This approach was through "digital communities of care" (Veazey, 2021; Francisco-Menchavez, 2018), where immigrant mothers created private digital groups on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms based on their language and ethnic backgrounds. Members of these digital communities are Latinx and Caribbean mothers who meet virtually daily to exchange information and knowledge about K-12 school policies and procedures. Using their native language and familial capital as assets, they engage in translanguaging to assist newcomer mothers in learning about their rights in schools. Mothers created these digital networks as a form of political activism to advocate for themselves, resist everyday racism in schools, educate and protect other immigrant mothers, and build a digital community that embraces motherhood capitals and values inclusion and belonging.

According to Francisco-Menchavez (2018), transnational mothers strategically utilize technology and the intersection of "race, class, and globalization" (p. 97) to create their motherhood transnational community, preserve their cultural heritage, and learn about their constitutional rights to take agency in their children's education. In this innovative and contemporary approach, mothers in this study have utilized their non-Western leadership skills, often seen as a deficit in U.S. schools, to develop a sense of community, motherhood activism, and belonging. It provides a platform for mothers to unite, build solidarity, advocate for their needs, and extend support to others, deconstructing this sense of individualism in U.S. culture.

Trivialization of Bullying in the Classroom

Bullying: The New Normal & Teasing for Fun. A major concern shared by the mothers was the normalization of bullying in their children's classrooms, committed by teachers and peers. A similar finding was found in a study conducted by Henriksen and Bengtsson (2018), which coined the framework "trivialization of violence" to examine how violent acts such as bullying and harassment are becoming increasingly accepted as the "new normal" or "nothing special" in schools and other public spaces.

During the interviews, mothers reported that schools trivialize bullying and violence toward emerging multilingual students. This can take various forms, including making raciolinguistic and ethnic jokes, "teasing for fun" (Odenbring & Johansson, 2021; Mills, 2018), and making implicit offenses such as mispronouncing or changing a student's name to accommodate monolingual English-dominant speakers while disregarding the ethnic backgrounds of multilingual minoritized students. Harmful statements about gender, accent, skin color, ethnic features, immigration status, and cultural and religious beliefs are also prevalent, and jokes about a student's country's socioeconomic conditions connecting it to violence and impurity. Anair's (Brazil) experience illustrates this trivialization of microaggressions and violence in schools. She stated

> Teachers see the bullying, but they don't do anything. My daughter told me that students are used to it. She once said an incorrect word, and everyone, including the teacher, laughed at her. She came home crying and saying: "even the teacher who is the authority in the classroom who was supposed to defend me was laughing at me." The teachers see the students being bullied, but they don't do anything. So, my daughter has to pretend that she does not see it. She needs to pretend that everything is okay, or she will be

bullied even more. *Aqui nos Estados Unidos, eles normalizam o bullying. Eles normalizam tudo*. In her school, Black students often need to assert themselves through anger or being loud to fight for respect. She says, for example, that she has a boy in the classroom who has autism. The other boys often bully him. The teachers see it, and they do nothing. Why don't you talk to him since he has no one?" I asked her. She replied: "*Mãe*, everyone who is friends with a bullied student will also be bullied even more. I am not ready for this to happen to me again!" So, she has to pretend everything is fine so that she can protect herself.

The trivialization of linguistic, racial, ableist, gendered, and ethnic jokes, insults, and invalidations is not new in public educational settings. A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2018) revealed that only 33% of the 3,265 racial microaggressions incidents against minoritized students in K-12 schools were reported by teachers. Further, the report shows that school leadership remained silent about these cases of hate and biases, and in 47 of 575 cases, no disciplinary action was taken (p. 5). This report shows that diverse forms of microaggressions and violence (emotional, verbal, and physical) in schools have been normalized by principals, teachers, counselors, and other school personnel, reinforcing white, nativist, ableist, and anti-immigration sentiments.

According to Sulkowski et al. (2014), many students who are victimized by bullying in school fear being labeled or harassed again, which prevents them from reporting the abuse. Further, as Anair and other mothers reported, boys of color are more likely to be bullied in schools. However, biased teachers ignore or perceive bullied students of color as "problems," unpolite, loud, angry, and violent (Lai & Kao, 2018). A study by Taliferro et al. (2020) shows that the lack of student-parent-teacher connectedness influences bullying and other forms of

violence in schools. Furthermore, school lack of protection and support has made boys of color less likely to report victimization to avoid appearing weak or vulnerable. In addition, Black and Brown boys may retaliate physically to protect themselves and demand respect in response to racialized and gendered expectations embedded in the U.S. schools' culture regarding their marginalized masculinity (Pascoe, 2012).

Klomek et al. (2010) state that "bullying among school-age children is now recognized as a major public health problem in the Western world" (p. 282). According to Fong et al. (2008), bullying incidents within schools may be perceived as harmless by educators and school administrators. However, this trivialization of violence may have short and long-term adverse effects on the offender, the victim, and the witness. Hymel & Swearer (2015) state that bullying takes many forms, such as "physical harm (physical bullying); to verbal taunts and threats (verbal bullying); to exclusion, humiliation, and rumor-spreading (relational or social bullying); to electronic harassment using texts, e-mails, or online mediums (cyberbullying)" (p. 295). The trivialization of this behavior can have damaging consequences on the academic and socioemotional development of children and young adults, leading to more severe forms of aggression in schools, such as physical fights, psychological abuse, and even mass shootings. Raitanen et al. (2019) study shows that bullying and the rise of white-dominant narratives in schools are significant factors contributing to violence in schools, such as mass shootings. Additionally, they highlight that those who hold positions of authority, such as government officials, policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and parents, tend to ignore the root causes of bullying and other forms of microaggression and insults, contributing to the trivialization of violence in educational settings.

According to the mothers' experiences in this study and previous studies about violence in school (Hymel & Swearer, 2015), bullying and microaggressions may also result in internalized racism (Padilla, 2001) and students' low self-esteem and distress. This leads to students' low academic achievement and conflicts between children, mothers, and schools. Furthermore, youth suicide, depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders may also result from trivializing violence. Bullying, however, affects not only the well-being and safety of students but also educators, families, and communities. In her artwork, Madeleine (Haiti) expresses the impacts of bullying in her family endured in school.

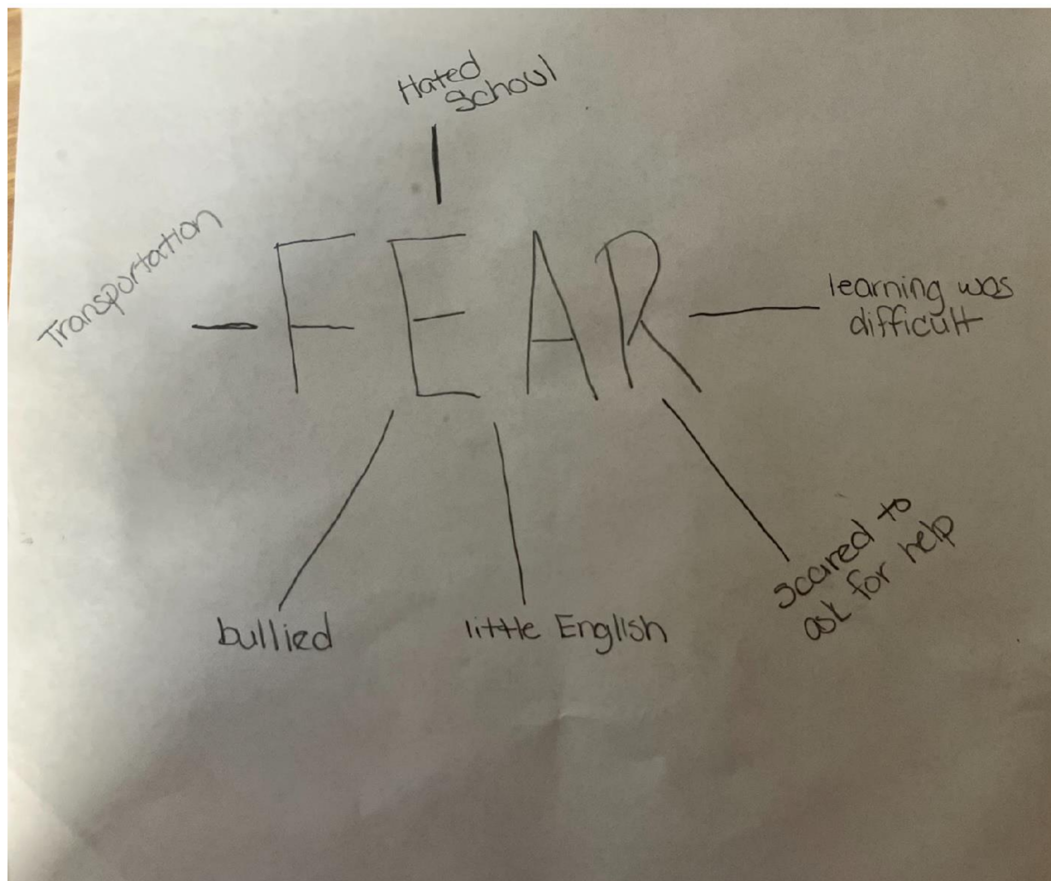


Figure 11: *Madeleine's artwork (Haiti)*

During the interviews, Madeleine highlighted

> I feel so embarrassed even to speak Creole because people would ask, what are you speaking? Is that Chinese or Mexican, or what is that? I heard at school that Haitians are dirty. You don't know how to speak English. Look at her hair. Why do they dress the way that they dress? Why do they talk so loudly? Why do they have that look on their face? Why do they look like they are always angry?

In her artwork and excerpt, Madeleine illustrates how Haitian emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and youth often experience racial, linguistic, and nativist microaggressions in school settings, causing parents and students anxiety, fear, and a negative perception of school. Madeleine's statement contains derogatory remarks or jokes regarding her race and ethnicity, racist comments and stereotypes regarding Haitian families, and eugenics associations with race, impurity, weakness, and disease.

Madeleine's experience illustrates examples of daily microaggressions experienced by Haitians, Black-Caribbean, and Afro-Latinx immigrant children, such as racial jokes about students' hair texture and phenotype, cultural dress, accent, and the relationship between violence, anger, race, ethnicity, and nationality. These findings are consistent with previous studies regarding the discrimination and microaggressions faced by Caribbean and Latinx of African descent children in schools and how Black and Brown immigrant pupils are still viewed as threats, abnormal, underachievers, and second-class in educational settings (Wallace et al., 2022; Dache et al., 2021; Cooper, 2020; Smith, 2020; García-Lousi, 2018; Haywood, 2017).

Flores & Román (2009) highlight that African-descendant peoples from the Caribbean and Latin America are communities that "typically fall between the cracks" in the U.S. (p. 319),

creating a social divide and contributing to their exclusion and invisibility. Additionally, the authors encourage reflection regarding a more comprehensive understanding of Blackness and *Latinidad* and what it means to be Afro-Latinx and Black Caribbean in the U.S. In addition, being an immigrant emerging multilingual person of African descent adds layers of complexity where race, ethnicity, migration, and language acquisition are interconnected, leading to a lack of visibility and exclusion for both Black emerging multilingual parents and students (Bryan et al., 2019; Cooper & Ibrahim, 2020).

Angela (Brazil) shared her son's experience with bullying at school, its intersection with race, ethnicity, language, and citizenship, and its impact on his self-esteem and family's well-being.

Figure 12: *Angela Soothing Her Little Ones (Brazil, art photography)*

Figure 13: *Angela's son receiving the Student Integrity Award (Brazil, art photography)*

My son's hair is very light and curly. However, a student started to say he has bad, crinkly hair. She told him, "*Você nunca será um Americano*. You are ugly; you are not intelligent. You are stupid." It got to the point that she took advantage of him falling while he was jumping rope, and she stepped on his back. Then he got up, already hitting her. This girl entered his mind in such a way that he started to ask me to straighten his hair. I did not understand why this happened, but it was because he was bullied at school. People here in the U.S. view us Latinos differently. For example, these two pictures represent me. *A primeira foto* shows me in the middle of chaos. I try to remain calm and

show my children that their mother is in control. The second picture is my son receiving an award at his school. This award showed me that we are on the right path. Despite all problems, *não tem sentimento maior* do que knowing that you are raising a child known for his integrity.

Angela expressed the same concerns as the other mothers in this study regarding microaggressions, bullying, and the influence on her family's well-being. However, Angela also celebrated her son's accomplishment in receiving the Student Integrity Award. The award exemplifies how emerging multilingual immigrants take agency in their children's education and use their motherhood assets to overcome everyday racism, invisibility, and language barriers to ensure their children thrive.

The statement made by Angela and other mothers regarding their children's response to bullying is related to Malette's (2017) research on retaliatory violence within schools. Malette notes that students' victims of bullying may resort to violence as a form of self-defense, but this can have negative consequences for Black and Brown students who are already stigmatized in U.S. culture and society. Students of color who retaliate physically against bullying or microaggressions in schools may face more discriminatory disciplinary measures from teachers, including suspension, expulsion, or even incarceration (Martin et al., 2016; Noguera, 2009; Casella, 2003) while the perpetrator goes unpunished. Malette emphasizes the importance of recognizing the role of racialized social dynamics in school violence, intervening to prevent bullying, and protecting victims rather than blaming them as the "problem."

Teachers and Schools' Expectations & Microinvalidations. Mothers constantly expressed concern about their emerging multilingual children experiencing raciolinguistic microinvalidation, differential treatment, and deficit-framing bias from their teachers due to their

race, ethnicity, and nationality. This finding is consistent with previous research on teacher bias and discrimination toward Latinx and Caribbean students (Wallace et al., 2022; Ayón & Philbin, 2017; Brown, 2015). For instance, Isabel (Venezuela) shared

> Three students in the classroom *ablan español y los demás hablan inglés*. My daughter told me that her teacher treats those who speak Spanish badly. She noticed the difference in how the teacher treated her and her two friends with the rest of the American children. One day, my daughter was sick and could not attend school. The teacher started to say bad things about my daughter in front of the other children. Just because we are from Venezuela does not mean we are bad people.

Similar to other mothers, Isabel expressed apprehensions about teachers' ethnic, racial, and linguistic biases, which often lead to negative perceptions about Latinx and Caribbean families, such as "bad people," criminals, lazy, or dishonest. A study by Huber & Cuevas (2012) found that Latinx students who experienced ethnic microaggressions from teachers were often perceived as inferior, deficient, and less capable than their English-dominant peers. This led to students' internalized oppression, resulting in shame about their ethnic and cultural background, self-doubt about their skills, and a lack of motivation to learn. Furthermore, Janaina's (Brazil) personal experience revealed how deficit-framing biases and institutional racism intersect with schools' expectations and family mobility. For example, she shared

> The schools near my home have bad grades. However, I wanted to put my children in a charter school near my house with a better grade, but I had to put my name in the lottery. I don't know if it is prejudice because I don't have enough knowledge. However, this school doesn't make it any easier. I found that most of the students at this school are Indians. Indians are very smart students. *Eles são bom em matemática*. I found it very

> *difícil para uma mãe brasileira* who is not persistent, you know? The first question I was asked was: Do your children speak *Inglês*? When you say no, they automatically say, "You better first enroll your child in a *escola pública normal* and stay a little time there. Have an immersion in English, and after, then you try here."

Mothers reported experiencing systemic enrollment discrimination when they tried to enroll their children in better-rated schools. For example, three mothers mentioned that Asian immigrant students are perceived as "good, smart, and hard workers." Latinx students, on the other hand, are viewed as "low-intelligence, lazy, slow learners, and unmotivated," particularly in school choice programs and other classes like mathematics, reading, and writing. School choice policies and these stereotypes and negative attitudes toward Latinx and Caribbean students prevent their children from attending high-performing public schools and succeeding in math, reading, and writing. Additionally, two mothers have expressed concerns about schools lacking preparedness in supporting emerging multilingual immigrant students with invisible disabilities, such as autism spectrum, particularly in math, reading, and writing education.

The findings of this study suggest that system racism, school officials' biases, as well as low expectations are consistent with previous research about emerging multilingual immigrant students. For example, Zavala (2014) found that racial and ethnic discrimination can negatively impact math education for Latinx students, resulting in discouragement, low self-esteem, and feelings of incompetence. Further, Zavala notes that Asian and Latinx students may be adversely affected by racial stereotypes, ethnic hierarchy, and school expectations, which create the dichotomy between "good immigrants" and "bad immigrants" in educational settings. In addition, these biases can lead to microaggressions, stigmatization, isolation, and stress for both ethnic groups.

In addition, the experiences shared by mothers align with the findings of Beal et al. (2010), which highlight the significance of reading proficiency in mathematics education, particularly for emerging multilingual students. The study suggests that students with strong reading skills are better equipped to solve complex problems and develop critical skills in STEM fields. However, teachers and school leaders who hold negative biases and exclude (consciously or unconsciously) Latinx and Caribbean multilingual students from math, reading, and writing instruction can cause microinvalidation and internalized oppression in students (de Araujo et al., 2018). This can lead to students feeling inadequate in math and reading, contributing to the remaining gap and underrepresentation of Black and Brown emerging multilingual students in STEM fields such as engineering, technology, cybersecurity, mathematics, and science.

Exclusion & Hidden Curriculum. Mothers constantly expressed concerns about the lack of diversity and representation of emerging multilinguals and people of color in the K-12 curriculum. This issue has made mothers and their children feel marginalized, invisible, and excluded. Some mothers have also noted that the absence of representation in the curriculum contributes to the rise of internalized racism in their children, including feelings of shame related to being Latinx or Caribbean descendant or being multilingual. The mothers shared their experiences with their children rejecting their native language and questioning why they have an accent, or they do not speak "good English." Mothers also shared that the lack of inclusion in the curriculum results in anti-migration microaggressions in the classroom, bullying, and other forms of school violence. For instance, Ophelie (Haiti) shared

> Haitians do not see themselves as African Americans or Blacks. They see themselves as *Caribenhos*...(pause, smile, and she corrects herself). No! They see themselves as Haitians. As a Haitian mother living in the U.S., I am not going to ask that schools teach

> children *história Haitiana*. I am not going to ask that. However, when they recognize Black History Month and Hispanic Month, if they can incorporate during the event not only the history and culture of African Americans and Hispanics but also *a história do Haiti*, the history of our different flags, and our heroes, it will be great! The Haitian population is also part of America. Everybody knows about Che Guevara and the great *líderes Hispanicos*. It would be great if they could share some of our Haitian heroes and how they were the first to break the slavery cycle.

A parallel was drawn by Madeleine (Haiti) between English language education and the lack of representation of Caribbean and Latinx of African descent immigrant communities in the K-12 curriculum, highlighting the exclusion and invisibility of Haitian communities or those whose native language is neither Spanish nor English. She stated

> The ESOL classes that they put *niños Haitianos* in are more for Spanish-speaking children. I guess they figured the Haitians were not too far from the borders with the Spanish. I feel like if they had a translator, someone who could speak Creole or even reach out to someone Haitian to translate could help schools better understand their Haitian students, why their students act the way they do, and how they are feeling. Instead, they give the Haitian children a Spanish teacher who only really speaks Spanish and does not understand my Creole. I feel bad for Haitian kids… because it's either *Inglês* or Español, which is unfair. I feel like they should have a translator there or someone who at least speaks or understands our language to help with that language barrier. Because I feel like a lot of the kids who are struggling would not be struggling. Here, a Haitian person is abnormal because they were never taught that in school until later in high

> school. They talked about random education, but we were the first to get freedom from slavery. Teaching about Haiti in high school is way too late in life.

Here, Ophelie and Madeleine have brought to light an important issue - the K-12 curriculum in Florida fails to acknowledge Black Diaspora history and the efforts of Haitians and other communities of color to abolish slavery, combat white supremacy oppression, and epistemic racism. During the interviews, mothers shared their experiences and concerns about how institutional racism is present in schools through the hidden curriculum and families of color invisibility. This exclusion denies the history of Black, Brown, and other historically marginalized communities while validating the history and epistemologies of the colonizers, the white patriarchal Christians. This issue is particularly significant given that Florida's Board of Education approved a new Social Studies standards curriculum in July 2023, which includes the discriminatory and harmful statement that "slaves developed skills which, in some instances, could be applied for their personal benefit" (Florida's Department of Education, 2023, p.6) neglecting to recognize the social injustices and short and long-term effects of slavery to Black and other people of color in the U.S. history. Furthermore, It is important to note that in 2022, the Florida Senate passed HB 7, also called the "Stop Wrongs Against Our Kids and Employees Act" or "Stop W.O.K.E. Act." This anti-black legislation prohibits teaching Critical Race Theory in K-12 public schools, which includes subjects related to the history of African Americans (Florida Senate, 2022) and other discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Mothers reported that embracing and integrating diverse cultures, histories, languages, and funds of knowledge into the classroom is crucial not only for students of color to feel represented and welcomed but also for fostering a sense of community, inclusion, and belonging while respecting the epistemologies and ontologies of students and families from diverse

linguistic, cultural, and ethnic-racial backgrounds. Furthermore, mothers have drawn attention to the harmful effects of racial-ethnic sameness discourses in the K-12 curriculum, labels, and categorizations based on race, language, ethnicity, and nationality. For instance, statements shared by teachers and school leaders such as “Portuguese is similar to Spanish” (Ana, Brazil), “Haiti is near the Spanish – the Dominican Republic, so they share similar culture” (Madeleine, Haiti), “Haitians are like African Americans” (Ophelie, Haiti). This sameness comparison fails to recognize students' and families’ funds of knowledge, heritage, and unique identities and needs.

Over the past five decades, sociologist Bryce-Laporte (1972) has raised the same concerns about sameness beliefs in schools toward Haitian children. He pointed out that Black immigrant children face unique challenges due to the intersection of race, ethnicity, nationality, and language. Furthermore, school officials without culturally sensitive training tend to overlook the student's identities, resulting in further challenges to Black immigrant children and families. For instance, “Haitian people are perceived by Whites as Blacks and as foreigners by native-born Blacks” (Bryce-Laporte, 1972, p.74), which impacts how Haitian children and youth perceive themselves in their new home country, how they negotiate their racial identities in the classroom and other public spaces, and how they adapt to U.S. culture and education. This issue about the experiences of Haitian immigrant children and families in schools has been explored by researchers such as Cela et al. (2021), Cone et al. (2014), Buxton et al. (2009), and Rong & Brown (2002).

It is also important to highlight that the concerns shared by the mothers about the hidden curriculum align with the findings of Peters et al. (2023) and Free and Križ 's (2021) research on teachers' biased expectations and the influence of a "non-so-hidden curriculum" on the academic progress of emerging multilingual immigrant students and parental involvement. Furthermore, all

the mothers emphasized that schools prioritize English (and sometimes Spanish), resulting in the neglect and exclusion of other children and families with diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, such as Portuguese and Haitian Creole speakers – the topmost ethnic home languages spoken in Florida (Sugarman & Geary, 2018).

Translation Support. Mothers reported that exclusion, underrepresentation, and invisibility are not only limited to the hidden curriculum, school assessments, and standardized tests but also occur when children and parents seek support from monolingual teachers, school administrators, counselors, translators, and other school staff. This is particularly problematic for emerging multilingual immigrant families who require additional assistance due to having non-English dominant children with visible and invisible disabilities, experiencing political and migration traumas, low literacy, or experiencing other forms of macro and microaggressions in schools. For instance, Madeline (Haiti) shared the following observation.

> I feel that you [schools] can help our community by trying to really understand us. Have a counselor to be able to speak with the students. Even if you feel you are doing a good job, have a counselor speak to students once a week to get a better understanding: "Hey, are you managing, okay? Are you learning? Is there something we can help you with? Getting a translator. The translator, for me, is the most important part because I feel like that is the biggest barrier for any Haitian parent and child. I feel like the translator is the biggest part for us. Doing *atividades diferentes* with us to understand our culture better. We want to understand you guys, too [school officials]. As far as *expectativas*, when it comes to school, I feel like children just show up because they need attendance. Having a translator and a counselor that explains: "You have to learn English. Learn math. Learn the reading." Also, making them [students and parents] feel like you care is so important.

> I feel like schools throw on the ESOL teacher, even though the teacher does not understand us and our culture. Give us time to explain ourselves instead of judging us. This judgment makes us feel even darker in a hole because we ask ourselves: "What are we doing wrong?"

Focusing on curriculum, translation, and parental engagement, Ophelie (Haiti) added

> *Las escuelas* can be a center of orientation for *padres,* but they [school officials] must be patient with them [parents]. Let the parents engage in their children's school activities. They are afraid of going to the school to speak to the principal. Do you know why? Because they don't speak English well. They do not know how to explain themselves. To engage with parents, they [the school officials] need to be patient. First of all, just because they don't speak English doesn't make them less intelligent. They are aware of what is going on. However, if you could have someone who speaks Creole, we would have fewer complaints. The first thing is to say to the parents: "You are my sister. You are my brother. I'm here to listen to you. I'm here to help you. Even though I cannot answer all of your questions, I can listen to you. I can advise you." If they know there are people who speak Creole, who are able to understand them, and listen to them privately, they would be more involved and engaged.

Like Madeleine and Ophelie, all the mothers pointed out the importance of translators, school officials' empathy, and acts of *carinho* (care) towards children and parents who face challenges in speaking English, understanding the U.S. educational system, curriculum, and the school's policies, practices, and procedures. Mothers have pointed out that the curriculum goes beyond just the subject material. It includes support and guidance for students and parents throughout the academic year from culturally sensitive school staff and translators who understand the unique

challenges emerging multilingual immigrant children and families face. These challenges can include immigration status, traumas, and fears during the pre and post-migration processes. This study's results are similar to those found in Cureton's (2020) study on refugee parents and their difficulties while navigating the U.S. education system.

ESOL Education. Mothers have raised concerns about school districts taking advantage of ESOL teachers for emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). According to the mothers, schools are putting too much pressure on ESOL teachers to cater to the needs of all emerging multilingual students and parents, regardless of their language proficiency, cultural background, and linguistic differences. As a result, students and families struggle and overburden teachers who lack the academic and linguistic resources in schools to assist their emerging multilingual students and parents. The results of this study are consistent with previous findings, such as those from Wong et al. (2022), who reported that ESOL teachers often face significant challenges due to insufficient support from school administrators and colleagues, which can negatively impact their physical and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, the mothers stressed that ESOL education training alone does not fully equip teachers to support emerging multilingual families. They emphasized that to comprehend the behaviors of both students and parents, it is crucial for teachers to comprehend the intersections of language, race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, disabilities, and immigration status. For instance, Guadalupe (Colombia) shared

> *A pesar de ser español*, the Spanish they speak in schools here is not quite right. The language is Spanish, from Spain, and I don't understand it. It's not clear to me. *Las escuelas* might improve if the administration collaborates with more Latino people, and how they use the language. Possibly we can give them some advice on this matter and

> how they can use a Spanish more *Latinizado* [more from Latin America]. It means being more respectful and empathic.

Guadalupe stresses the significance of school officials having cultural sensitivity and understanding when dealing with language barriers that families may face. If school personnel lack this understanding, their ESOL tools may not meet the needs of students and their families. Guadalupe reminds us that cultural and linguistic differences should be recognized and respected in educational environments. Furthermore, all the mothers highlighted that ESOL classes in economically disadvantaged communities are inferior, segregated, and stigmatized. Angela (Brazil) highlighted

> *Um dia*, my son came back home crying a lot. I am not sure how the schools work, but during recess, all the children went to play, and the teacher told my son that he was not allowed to play because he had to take online *classes de ESOL*. Today he created a trauma of online and ESOL classes. In his head, he thought that he could not play with the other students because he was *Brasileiro*. I don't know if that was what the teacher said, but maybe how she said it.

Here, Angela highlighted the adverse effects of microaggressions on students based on ethnicity, nationality, race, and language. These microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional. Angela's statement emphasizes that some ESOL students feel ashamed of their multilingual skills, especially among the Latinx community, because of the way their teachers treat them. These experiences can harm ESOL students, leading to cognitive trauma and internalized oppression. It can also influence family relationships.

Lucia (Venezuela) also shared the systemic challenges and discrimination faced by parents and students enrolled in ESOL programs, which cause distress to both children and mothers. Lucia expressed her experience through poetry and painting.

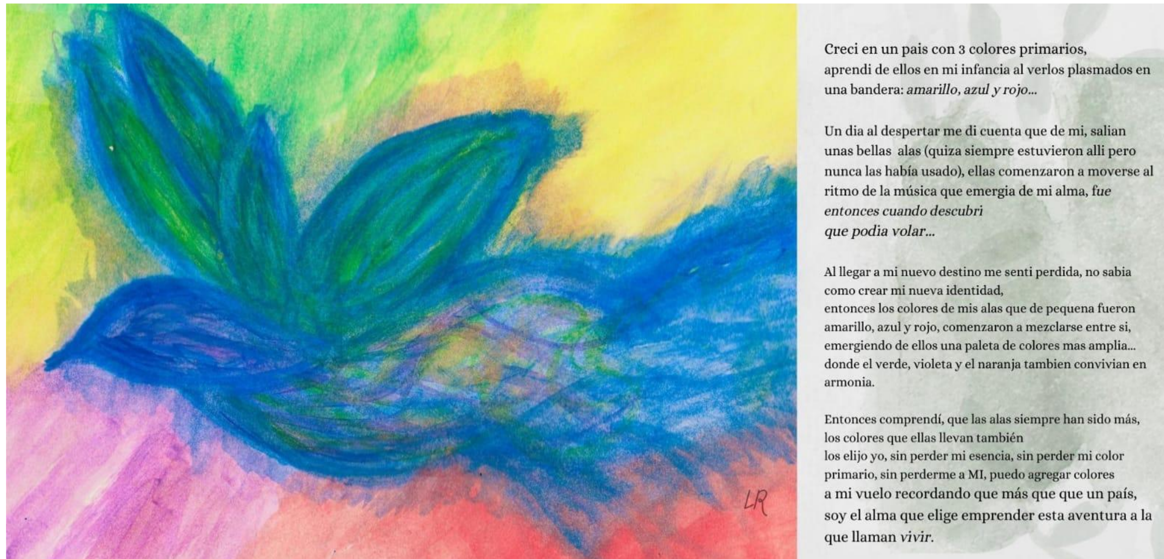


Figure 14: *Lucia's artwork and poetry (Venezuela)*

She stated

> My son is fluent in English, but he attends ESOL classes. The school tested him and found that he has a speech delay. He started to have speech therapy, and the therapist spoke English only with him. Nowadays, he does not want to speak Spanish anymore. He is rejecting my language, but my language is the only thing that I can give to him from my culture. He even told me that when he grows up, he will have a big house and one room for a mom who only speaks English. I noticed that I became silent. I felt guilty. I feel like it's my fault because I am not communicating correctly with my child. When a child is exposed to more than one language, their brain develops differently, and they take longer to fully embrace one language because he is trying to understand two different languages at the same time. So, if you compare a child with learning English

> and Spanish to a child that is only English-speaking. Of course, the only English speaking is going to have more vocabulary or more words that they are required to say. But the bilingual child also has a big vocabulary, just in different languages. But in the U.S., bilingual children are treated like they have speech delays.

First, Lucia's artwork and poem (in Spanish), and excerpt (original quote in English) demonstrate how mothers utilize their full linguistic repertoire in speaking and writing to engage in multilingualism and translanguaging, communicate, and share their experiences. Second, Lucia emphasizes the detrimental effects of English-Only programs and practices in schools on the development of multilingual children. She also sheds light on the challenges faced by mothers as they strive to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage while navigating a new school environment in the U.S.

Moreover, Lucia's story reveals how English-Only policies, practices, and school processes can perpetuate epistemic racism and negatively impact multilingual families with limited financial resources. For example, her bilingual son was diagnosed with speech delay simply because he did not speak as fast as his monolingual English-speaking peers. This reinforces the harmful notion that multilingual children from the Global South are deficient and slow learners. Other mothers shared similar stories of feeling guilty because their children did not fully assimilate into U.S. culture or meet the school's linguistic and cultural expectations. These expectations, rooted in racism and ethnic discrimination, can strain the mother-child relationship and make mothers question their competence as parents and their knowledge of languages and cultures. This can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and a reluctance to express themselves.

There is a large body of literature concerning the overrepresentation of emerging multilingual students in special education and the long-term effects of deficit discourses on students and their parents (Hulse, 2021). As described by the mothers, ESOL classes in limited financial resource schools are often perceived to be for slow learners or students with academic or cognitive challenges. Also, multilingualism is seen as a problem or an added burden for teachers rather than an asset, resulting in youth trauma and shame for being multilingual, leading to students rejecting their family language and cultural heritage.

Lucia (Venezuela) also shared that after her son was diagnosed with speech delay, she transferred him from a high Latinx population school to one with a better rating through the School Choice program. Once her son was accepted into the school, she noticed that most of the students in the program were white and English-speaking. Lucia acknowledged that students in the School Choice program received a high-quality education, and ESOL classes are tailored to their needs. Lucia's experiences highlight the inequitable and gentrified nature of bi-multilingual education in Florida's public schools. According to Delavan et al. (2021) study on bilingual public schools in the U.S., "white English-dominant students tend to receive much more attention and praise from teachers and administrators" (p. 306) along with more resources. However, students learning ESOL in schools with limited financial resources are frequently segregated and treated as if they are slow learners, unintelligent, or students with linguistic disabilities.

Motha (2006) points out that the current ESOL programs, policies and practices, and insufficient teacher training result in feelings of inferiority and shame among language-minoritized students. This reinforces the isolation of ESOL students and promotes linguicism,

which, as Van Dijk (2000) explains, involves not only being prohibited from using one's native language but also being excluded or marginalized in communication activities (p. 73).

Tokenism and Objectification of Latinx and Caribbean Culture in Multicultural Education. Mothers raised concerns about the schools' superficial approach towards multicultural education that perpetuates gender, ethnic, and racial stereotypes and stigmas about Latinx and Caribbean communities. They pointed out that such activities and events create the impression of homogeneity among Latinx and Caribbean communities, assuming that they all speak the same language and follow the same cultural practices. The mothers expressed a desire for schools to view the linguistic and cultural diversity of these communities as assets rather than deficits. They suggested using this opportunity to engage with immigrant parents and integrate their history and heritage during multicultural activities as a way to demonstrate respect towards the funds of knowledge and experiences of emerging multilingual immigrant families. Mothers explained that engaging immigrant parents in schools not only fosters a sense of belonging but also helps other children and parents to have a better understanding of the Latinx and Caribbean culture while reducing anti-migration sentiments, microaggressions, bullying, internalized racism, and other forms of discrimination and violence against minoritized immigrant children and families. For example, Lopez (Dominican Republic) shared

> *Hace dos semanas, en el colegio de mi hijo, tuvieron una actividad* called Multicultural Night. It is a night on which some families prepare a typical dish from their country, so others can try it and get to know a little about the culture through eating. I think maybe they [schools] can take this activity and develop it more deeply. It is not only about that country's food but also the language and important words. This week could be Spanish; next month could be Mandarin or Brazilian Portuguese. In other words, every month,

> they could work more thoroughly. They could put together a more in-depth activity covering not only food but a little more detail about each country.

Sharing a similar experience with multicultural education, Isabel (Venezuela) highlighted

> I think that schools could encourage students to represent their country. Expose their pride in being *Venezuelano, Colombiano, Indiano, Chinese, and Brasileiro*. I think that would also help with that part of the racism.

Angela (Brazil) emphasized the significance of multicultural education and inclusive schools. She highlighted that it's not only about acknowledging students' ethnicity and racial background but also their gender and sexuality. Moreover, Angela stressed the importance of eliminating the negative stereotypes associated with the refugee community. She stated

> Flags about *racismo*, gender issues, and immigration also need to be raised. For example, here we have many *refugiados*. They should not be ashamed of saying that they are refugees. Raising the immigrant flag or creating a day of immigrant pride would be so important.

The concerns expressed by mothers regarding the schools' approach to multiculturalism are consistent with the work of various multicultural scholars (Bery, 2014). For instance, Goodwin (1997) provides an in-depth analysis of the past and current challenges of implementing multicultural education in the K-12 public schools in the U.S. Goodwin stated

> Should be no surprise then that too much of the work in the name of multicultural curriculum, - when it is present – is superficial, fragmented, and decontextualized, offered by teachers who have had little preparation in either the content or pedagogy of cultural relevance and who therefore can do little more than reinforce a tokenized

perspectives of 'minorities' in this country through an emphasis on celebrations, contributions, food, and heroes (Goodwin, 1997, p. 3121).

Mothers' narratives and excerpts by Goodwin reveal that multicultural education can reinforce perspectives that prioritize whiteness and perpetuate colorblind biases in schools. This is often done through tokenism and sameness rhetoric, which can lead to the objectification of non-Western cultures and communities. Such practices embedded in multicultural school activities can contribute to the internalization of conventional femininity and sexualization of Latinx and Caribbean girls. This is often seen in the use of colorful costumes, ethnic food, body movement, and Latin dance (such as salsa, samba, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, and Brazilian Carnaval dancers). These stereotypes can create a dichotomy of "good smart girls" and "bad but fun girls" and contribute to the objectification of Latinx culture through the intersection of gender, race, class, and migration. Studies have shown that the objectification of Latinx girls in schools can negatively affect their academic and well-being. Researchers such as Clonan-Roy (2018), Garcia (2009), Lundström (2006), and Rolón-Dow (2004) have highlighted the impact of this phenomenon, as well as how school officials may display biases towards Latinx girls in their monitoring and disciplinary practices.

Based on that, multicultural programs and curricula can provide an opportunity for schools to explore deeper the cultures, heritage, and history of racial-ethnic diverse communities. This initiative can promote cultural understanding and respect while establishing a stronger connection with those communities. Valuing cultural practices and traditions such as dances, music, and food, while highlighting their historical significance, can contribute to reduce biases in schools and foster inclusion while challenging ethnic-racial-gendered labels. This approach

can also raise awareness, promote cultural preservation without tokenizing or perpetuating stereotypes about Latinx and Caribbean girls, women, and heritage practices.

Furthermore, multicultural education can also perpetuate the idea of "us" (U.S. citizens, insiders) versus "them" (immigrants, outsiders) and can overlook the diversity within Latinx and Caribbean communities, particularly those communities that do not speak Spanish, such as Brazilians, Haitians, and other South and Central American Indigenous and African descendent communities. According to Ngo (2010), multicultural education in K-12 schools promotes the idea of "celebrating diversity and inclusion," as well as "embracing differences" while refusing the epistemologies and ontologies of those communities. While the rhetorical intent of multicultural education is to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion for all, it can reinforce power dynamics and perpetuate stigmas and inequalities. This can leave linguistically and racially-ethnically diverse students and families feeling invisible and excluded in schools. During the interview, Ana (Brazil) provided an insightful perspective on multicultural education and the experiences of undocumented students and families. She stated

> Sometimes, schools can hurt undocumented children who do not share their ethnicity and culture as a form of protection. Some children don't know where they were born... This issue doesn't exist in high school, but children in middle school have this conversation about immigration. One day in middle school, *minha filha* asked me if she had the documents. I asked her: "*Quais documentos*?" She said: "The documents to stay here in the U.S." My response was: "Yes, you have your passport. Why?" She asked me because other girls talked about undocumented children in the classroom. If schools create a multicultural event, this other undocumented child can be impacted because she does not know the other side of the story. She doesn't have documents. Maybe her parents don't

> allow her to talk about her ethnicity and culture as a form of protection against deportation. I think multicultural events are problematic because undocumented children are in danger. This child already knows she does not have the documents. I have several friends who are going through that. These multicultural events can provoke shame and fear in undocumented children.

Ana's insights highlight the risks associated with multicultural education in schools towards vulnerable students. Mothers' experiences suggest multicultural education goes beyond superficial celebrations of cultural diversity. In its place, it should provide school officials, peers, and families with an opportunity to reflect on the inequalities and challenges faced by historically marginalized children and families such as undocumented students. Aligned with this finding, Ngo (2010) emphasized the importance of uncomfortable conversations within schools during multicultural activities and creating safe spaces in the classroom “for students to talk about and play out the tensions that exist in their daily lives” (p. 491). Important discussions on topics such as Black history, slavery, migration, ableism, racism, microaggressions, gender, sexuality, and other social justice and multicultural issues are often repressed by a culture of "white niceness" that only connects multiculturalism with shallow and superficial cultural associations such as dance, food, and heroes (Doharty, 2019). These difficult conversations during multicultural activities are now more important than ever, especially since the Florida government has prohibited discussions about Critical Race Theory (CRT) and related diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in schools. Additionally, the state has introduced several bills that limit the rights of undocumented immigrants, such as CS/CS/SB 1718: Immigration and anti-LGBTQ+ rights, which are causing fear and trauma in the targeted communities.

Digital Literacy Divide. The use of technology in schools opens various possibilities. It can improve teachers' and school leaders' connections to the community and families, help students gain valuable transnational experiences, and help them develop the skills they will need in the future. However, all the mothers' participants in this study discussed their concern about the overdependence on technology in Florida public schools (e.g., school apps, text messages, audio recorded messages) in a non-inclusive manner, contributing to a superficial communication, exclusion, and invisibility of parents who are not fluent in English and have limited familiarity with the U.S. education system. According to the mothers' experiences, schools began relying on technology for parental communication before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this reliance became more pronounced after schools returned to in-person classes, contributing to the digital divide and communication gap in schools. Most mothers mentioned that schools require parents to communicate with school personnel via the school's digital app rather than in person, overlooking parents who are learning the language and unfamiliar with the school's procedures. For example, Anair (Brazil) shared

> I would like to talk to my daughter's teachers. It would be nice to meet in person with the teachers using um *Google tradutor*, but that is not possible. I am lucky because I talk about everything with my daughter. She tells me everything. For example, some students broke down their school's bathroom during a Spring event and posted a video on TikTok. The school sent all parents a recorded voice message saying everything was okay. At no time did they come to talk to us, like: "*Oi? Tudo bem?* I want to let you know that your daughter is safe…." Here, the schools do not do that. They just recorded an automatic voice message and sent it to all parents. They did not even care if the message was understood by parents who did not speak and understand English.

Anair's experience highlights the daily digital exclusion, microinvalidations, and linguistic discrimination emerging multilingual mothers face in their children's schools. Mothers reported facing significant obstacles in schools due to superficial communication and digital exclusion, which were problems before the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to persist today. As a result, they feel left out of their children's education.

According to Adair (2015), overlooking the perspectives of emerging multilingual children and parents, neglecting their unique challenges, and excluding them from decision-making processes are all forms of normalized discrimination and microaggression in schools. In today's context, unrealistic digital expectations from school leaders and teachers and digital exclusion in schools are contemporary forms of everyday microaggression toward emerging multilingual immigrant families and children.

Park et al. (2021) have also found similar results in their study with Latinx mothers during COVID-19. They point out that the issue is not only the digital divide (Goedhart et al., 2019; Katz & Gonzales, 2016) but also the digital literacy divide. According to them, the digital literacy divide "reflects larger structures of racism, discrimination, income inequality, toxic stress, and a culture that threatens to punish 'negligent parents' " (Park et al., 2021, p. 87). As the mothers in this dissertation shared, teachers often perceive non-English dominant parents as problematic because they are unfamiliar with the school's technologies, leading to parental exclusion and teachers' superficial communication. Additionally, Park et al. (2021) reveal that schools often employ social justice and niceness rhetoric to promote digital inclusion and education for all by providing laptops and iPads to low-income children and virtual training to parents while disregarding parents' cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic constraints, reinforcing otherness and inequity. For instance, Maria (Venezuela) shared

> I don't speak any English. Sometimes, I would like someone at school to explain certain things to me. Once, I contacted the school, and they told me to send an email. It took two months to receive a response. As my child is gradually becoming blind, I have been trying to enroll him in a program that teaches braille and English. Eight months later, I'm still waiting. One day, he was bullied at school, and they broke his glasses. I tried to contact the teacher to understand what happened, but one month later, I still did not hear back from her. This situation with the school sometimes can affect us a little, especially us mothers, who can see our children crying when they come home from school. Instead of playing, he immediately goes to bed feeling sad and down. He used to love playing ball. Communication between teachers and mothers would help, but there is no communication.

With tears in her eyes, Maria paused and showed me several text messages she sent to her son's teacher, in which she attempted to follow school digital communication policies and ask why her son was bullied at school but rarely received a response. Maria's story shows parental invisibility through technology and how school officials normalize physical bullying toward emerging multilingual children with disabilities. Maria's son was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum and having a visual impairment. Also, he was gaining fluency in the English language. Communicating via text, Maria attempted to engage with her son's teacher, as seen in the image below.

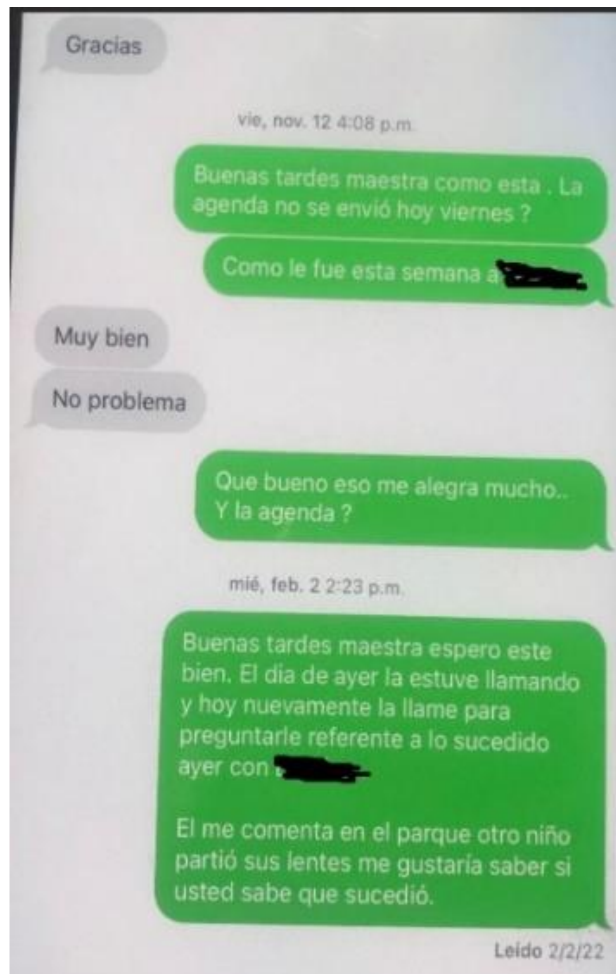


Figure 15: *Maria attempts to communicate with her son's teacher.*

Translanguaging translation (Portuguese & English):

> *Boa tarde professora*. I hope you are doing well. Yesterday I called you, and today I called you again to ask about what happened yesterday with him [my son]. He told me that another child broke his glasses. *Eu gostaria de saber* if you know what happened.

Maria conveyed that she could see that the message had been received by the teacher, but the teacher did not respond. This experience is one example of digital exclusion shared by the mothers I interviewed. The mothers' narratives parallel Cioè-Pena's (2022) findings about how technology in schools negatively affects the engagement of non-English speakers' mothers. That study reported how immigrant emergent multilingual parents, especially mothers of children with

disabilities, felt marginalized and excluded from their children's daily academic experiences despite their attempts to become involved. Furthermore, Cioè-Peña points out that Spanish-dominant mothers have asked questions, used digital translators, viewed videos online, and contacted schools for assistance. However, they have not been given support or follow-up communication, similar to the mothers' experiences in this dissertation.

Wong-Villacres et al. (2019) highlight the importance of schools understanding the sociocultural values of immigrant parents, which differ from those of U.S.-born parents. Rather than enforcing Western digital parenting approaches, schools need to "make an effort to build a piece of digital technology according to parents' wants, needs, values, and existing family and community practices" (Wong-Villacres et al., 2019, p. 5). As Hofstetter & McHugh (2021) point out, although schools are trying to find the best approaches to support non-English dominant families, "distribution of technology, however, does not solve digital literacy challenges, nor does it automatically improve the ability of parents to serve as supplemental instructors and supervisors of their children's online education" (p. 8). Mothers emphasized the importance of mentoring and guiding emerging multilingual immigrant parents in comprehending the U.S. educational system while acknowledging their cultural background, language and digital barriers, socioeconomic conditions, and migration status. This is crucial for fostering parental engagement and promoting digital inclusion in K-12 public schools across the United States.

From Classroom to Home: Building a Bridge of Hope

Despite the challenges shared by the mothers, Angela (Brazil) conveyed *esperança* (*esperanza*, hope) through the connection she developed with her son's teacher. She shared that her son's teachers went above and beyond in providing invisible emotional support and putting in extra effort to ensure her son's success, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when

students, teachers, and families were adapting to the "new normal." According to Angela, feelings of hope and inspiration were especially evident when students were struggling in online classes, mathematics, reading, and writing, but teachers adjusted their practices to support their students and families. Additionally, her son's teacher did not tolerate bullying practices in the classroom, which was admirable. For example, Angela shared

> *Em matemática*, the way of thinking that *americanos* teach is completely different from how Brazilians teach. So, it's very difficult. My son has always been very good at math. His grade started to drop because he was taking online classes and he created trauma from online classes. One day my nephew and my niece stopped to try to teach him, but they couldn't. My husband couldn't. The four of us together couldn't do it. My son was crying. *Eu enviei uma mensagem para a professora* and said: "*Professora*, we are having a lot of difficulty teaching my son because of this. It's been very difficult, I don't know your method, when you do a math calculation here everything is different. So, I'm having a lot of difficulty. *Então*, *ela respondeu* and asked me if I would allow her to call my son on a Friday after school, so she would give him a private lesson. She was going to reset his grades because they were bad, and she was going to give my son private lessons so he could try to keep up with the class. Wow, this teacher was an angel! She called him on a Friday, and everyone was stunned trying to understand and she explained everything. She spent about 3 hours with him like this, talking and explaining. She explained the entire material and did the assignment with him. And today he is doing well in *matemática*.

Angela's example highlights the significance of effective and consistent communication between teachers and parents, as well as the importance of safe spaces in schools where parents feel comfortable and welcome to ask for support. The connection between teachers and parents can

motivate parental engagement and improve the academic outcomes of emergent multilingual students who are struggling in the classroom.

Additionally, Angela's story highlights the often-overlooked emotional labor of educators striving for student success. Angela's teacher worked extra hours on a Friday afternoon to provide support for her son. Angela's example emphasizes the importance of compassionate, caring, and culturally sensitive trained teachers and school leaders who understand the challenges that emergent multilingual students and families face, especially in a system that relies on online communication. Her story also highlights the importance of parents, policymakers, government, and the community in recognizing the invisible work that teachers and school administrators do to support their students and families, especially during a difficult time such as COVID-19, when teachers are overworked, underpaid, not allowed to talk and approach diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in the classroom, and forced to follow a mandated curriculum that enforces the idea that "one size fits all". Furthermore, teachers often have to deal with overcrowded classrooms, which only adds to their workload and makes it harder for them to provide individualized attention to their students and parents.

Mothers' Recommendations to Schools

At the end of each interview, I asked the mothers to imagine me (the researcher) as a school leader, teacher, or policymaker. I asked them to share recommendations on how schools can better communicate with, engage, and support emergent multilingual immigrant parents, children, and families. As policymakers and school officials often overlook the perspectives of emergent multilingual families and other communities of color, it was crucial for me to consider the mothers' recommendations in this study. The following recommendations are provided by

mothers to improve schools' policies, practices, and procedures for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Educators Training to Support Newcomers. It is important that school personnel consider the cultural, educational, and immigration backgrounds of immigrant families to provide adequate support. Schools can tailor their engagement strategies to help newcomer parents understand school cultures and available services and to know whom to contact if parents have any questions. During school meetings and activities, schools need to consider parents' language proficiency and provide parents access to at least one of the four communication domains (listening, writing, speaking, and reading). It is essential to respect the complexity of language learning when communicating with multilingual parents to ensure they feel welcomed and equipped to understand information shared by school staff.

Supporting Families' Literacy in Mathematics, Reading, and Writing. This study found that all mothers faced obstacles in supporting their children's mathematics, reading, and writing learning. To address this issue, mothers recommended that schools provide additional guidance to emergent multilingual parents, especially those with neurodivergent children. Previous research has indicated that linguistically minoritized students tend to perform below average in these three subjects (Maarouf, 2019; Fry, 2007). Despite mothers' best efforts, they have limited knowledge of U.S. pedagogy and instruction in these areas, which can impact their children's grades, GPAs, and standardized test scores. Furthermore, financial constraints also prevent parents from enrolling their children in after-school programs or tutoring classes in math, reading, and writing, making it harder for the students' success. Additionally, this support approach may encourage students from linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds to

pursue STEM careers in fields such as cybersecurity, engineering, and science, where they are currently underrepresented.

Family Digital Literacy. Mothers suggested investing in digital literacy programs for families in order to improve communication between parents and school staff so they can better support their children's education. Furthermore, developing a family digital literacy program can also increase parental awareness of potential cyber threats and teach them how to protect their children against digital harm. Due to the popularity of social media and other digital platforms, immigrant families and students are at greater risk of digital threats such as cyberbullying, financial and immigration scams, disinformation, child exploitation, and human trafficking. By providing parents with digital literacy, mothers will be better able to support their children in using technology.

Trauma-Informed Approach for Educators. Investing in trauma-informed and culturally relevant professional development can benefit school districts. This includes training for principals, teachers, school secretaries, bus drivers, counselors, and translators. This training can significantly benefit families who have experienced migration-related distress. Culturally relevant practices can also help prevent microaggressions in school settings caused by teachers and peers.

According to feedback from mothers, it is recommended that educators approach emergent multilingual parents with compassion and empathy, avoiding the perpetuation of negative stereotypes or unrealistic expectations. This involves being patient when parents are trying to speak during meetings, texting through the school app, or when families are struggling due to their immigration status. Creating a safe environment where parents can express their opinions and concerns without fear of judgment or discrimination is also essential. Building

stronger relationships between schools and homes requires offering opportunities for emergent multilingual immigrant parents to engage in meaningful conversations and participate in decision-making processes, regardless of their language proficiency, immigration status, race, ethnicity, or nationality.

Funds of Knowledge are Assets, not Deficits. The schools need to recognize that parents' cultural, familial, and linguistic capital is an asset to the school rather than a "problem." For example, mothers suggested that multilingual parents could help other newcomer families by using their language and cultural skills or by helping other parents or students learn their native language. Schools can also create parent-to-parent activities where English-dominant parents can volunteer to assist emerging multilingual parents in practicing English. By implementing this approach, schools can strengthen community relationships and value parents' funds of knowledge while creating a welcoming and supportive school environment.

Inclusive Parent-Teacher Meetings & Translation. Parent-teacher meetings need to include emergent multilingual families. Florida's policies require schools to provide parents with documents and information in their native language (if feasible). In case schools cannot translate important documents, mothers suggested that schools provide parents with meeting materials ahead of time so they can translate and ask questions during the meetings. Additionally, schools need to ensure that non-English-speaking parents can access information on the school's website, social media posts, and other communication platforms.

Families from different linguistic backgrounds should also be considered by schools, not just Spanish speakers. For effective parent-teacher communication and assessment of student progress, teachers, counselors, and parents should meet regularly every three to four months. Mothers highlighted the importance of culturally responsive and trauma-informed translators to

prevent inaccurate translations that may cause distress, re-traumatization, and harm to families. Schools also need to consider emerging multilingual parents who are not literate in English or their native language.

School Curriculum & Instruction. Mothers have recommended implementing an inclusive curriculum that acknowledges linguistic and ethnic-racial diversity. They have raised concerns about promoting stereotypes regarding communities of color through music, food, and dance at multicultural school events. To address this issue, mothers recommended that schools connect these cultural practices with history in a deeper and more meaningful way (especially when approaching the history and cultural practices of the African diaspora and Haitian history). By doing so, schools can create an opportunity for parents and their children to engage more in schools and share their own experiences of their home country, language, dances, cuisine, history, and heritage traditions. This can also increase respect and cultural awareness and help to deconstruct stereotypes and biases embedded in the US culture and media about the Latinx and Caribbean cultures. Integrating the epistemologies and funds of knowledge of linguistic and diverse families into the curriculum can contribute to decreasing racism, microaggressions, and other forms of biases and discrimination in schools. Additionally, such integration can assist students of color in feeling represented in the curriculum.

Protecting & Strengthening Undocumented Families Legal Rights. Multicultural and educational events positively impact promoting diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging. However, some undocumented or vulnerable immigrant students may experience anxiety and trauma in these multicultural activities. Some students may not feel comfortable expressing their cultural heritage due to concerns about migration status, bullying, and microaggressions in school settings. Educators and school leaders must consider the unique challenges undocumented

and asylum-seeking students face when discussing immigration, deportation, and family separation and take measures to ensure their students' and families' emotional safety.

Furthermore, Florida public schools require background checks for parent volunteers to ensure student safety. School leaders need to clarify whether undocumented parents are allowed to volunteer at their children's schools and how background checks are conducted to ensure parents' safety. Parents' rights need to be explained, even if school officials expect parents to be aware of them.

Language Assessment & Special Needs. Mothers highlighted the need to educate speech-language professionals about multilingual issues to support emergent multilingual families and children better. According to the mothers' experiences, school speech therapy services often neglect students' full multilingual language repertoire and solely prioritize English, reinforcing white, monolingual, and nativist biases towards linguistically diverse children. This approach may cause a child to experience distress, such as internalized racism, low self-esteem, and shame about their family and heritage, and contribute to poor parent-child relationships.

Children Translate to their Parents. Mothers reported that asking students to serve as translators during essential school events, such as disciplinary actions such as suspension or parent-teacher meetings, can cause students emotional distress and harm. As a result, it can also contribute to bullying and peer microaggressions, resulting in internalized racism, family conflict, and students' mental health challenges. Mothers highlighted that assigning a child to translate should be carefully considered to avoid interfering with the student's academic development and overall well-being.

Invest in Culturally Responsive Parental Training. The findings of this study indicate the necessity for increased funding of resources towards parental education programs, especially

for parents new to the U.S. public school system (Sugarman, 2021). As per the feedback provided by mothers, it is recommended that these programs adopt a less formal approach, reducing the reliance on excessive PowerPoint presentations and more hands-on and real-life experiences. This parental training needs to cover essential topics, such as vaccination policies for non-U.S. citizen students, school enrollment procedures, available educational programs for multilingual families, volunteering policies for undocumented and asylum seeker parents, services for students with special needs and visible and invisible disabilities, social services for families with limited financial resources and immigration status barriers, culturally-responsive and trauma-informed counseling, and information about public mental health assistance. This training can help parents better navigate the educational system and provide support for children and families affected by immigration policies, political trauma, microaggressions, and other forms of discrimination and exclusion in schools.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter takes an intersectional approach to examine the experiences of thirteen emergent multilingual immigrant mothers from Caribbean, Central, and South American backgrounds. These mothers have limited financial resources and varying English language proficiency and immigration statuses (i.e., undocumented, refugees, asylum seekers, international students, permanent residents, and mixed migration status). This study investigates the impact of English-Only and anti-migration policies, practices, and processes present in schools on the well-being of mothers and their children, the impacts on their parental engagement, and their access to education.

Based on mothers' lived experiences, the findings of this research lead to two significant conclusions. Firstly, mothers experienced interactions with school personnel and curriculum

practices that normalize a culture of exclusion and microaggressions toward immigrant children and families of linguistic and ethnic-racial diversity. Secondly, discontinuous and superficial communication from school personnel influenced mothers dis/engagement, mobility, and school choice. Those two findings are not static; they are fluid and intersect with each other at different moments and simultaneously.

Furthermore, this study examined how schools normalize microaggressions toward immigrant families while trivializing bullying and microinvalidations by teachers and peers. The harmful effects of contemporary everyday racism extend to the well-being, academic achievement, and sense of belonging of multilingual immigrant mothers, children, and broader families. Furthermore, these findings highlighted the discrepancy between Florida's policies and the actual experiences of these families in schools. Mothers reported that school policies, practices, and processes divide schools, parents, children, families, and communities instead of fostering connection. Additionally, unrealistic expectations, hidden curriculum, and the lack of representation of linguistically and ethnically diverse children and families in schools contribute to their invisibility and exclusion.

Finally, the chapter delves into the issue of tokenism in multicultural education and how schools' non-inclusive use of technology neglects non-English dominant parents and their children. However, the findings of this study demonstrate how mothers use “digital communities of care” as a digital political tool to advocate for their children's rights while also providing support to other emerging multilingual immigrant mothers.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The way schools care about children is reflected

in the way schools care about the children's families.

If educators view children simply as students,

they are likely to see the family as separate from the school.

If educators view students as children,

they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners.

Epstein, 2010, p.81

This critical qualitative study examines the experiences of emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children in Florida's K-12 public schools. This chapter discusses the findings and explores the relationship between mothers' experiences in schools, educational policies, school leadership, and educators' professional development training, practices, and processes. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

The research question guiding this study was *How did emergent multilingual immigrant mothers experience the K-12 education system in Florida?* The sub-question was *How did schools communicate with emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and their children?* Two findings emerged from the collected data.

Finding 1. Mothers experienced interactions with school personnel and curriculum practices that normalize a culture of exclusion, such as microaggressions, toward immigrant children and families of linguistic and ethnic-racial diversity.

Finding 2. Discontinuous and superficial communication from school personnel influenced mothers' dis/engagement, mobility, and school choice.

Discussion of the Findings

The mothers' stories and the findings from this study are complex. Despite my best efforts to analyze the mothers' narratives comprehensively and provide a clear picture of their experiences in their children's schools, their experiences are intertwined and fluid with institutional and contemporary forms of racism, linguicism, nativism, and racialized immigration sentiments embedded in school policies, practices, and processes. Certain aspects of the mothers' experiences need further examination, especially regarding how immigration status influences families' access to public education and other essential public services.

The Normalization of Microaggressions

Microaggression is a type of contemporary racism that occurs through hidden or unconscious behaviors (Kohli et al., 2017). It is commonly referred to as "new racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), and it leads to social inequality by excluding linguistically and racially diverse children, families, and communities. Microaggressions are defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p.273).

Microaggression is a form of everyday racism (Essed, 1991), and it can take the form of *microinsults*, such as treating immigrant emerging multilingual parents and children of color as inferior, stereotyping cultural identities, making funny jokes and assumptions about an individual's legality and intelligence based on race, ethnicity, gender, dis/abilities, class, religion, and immigration status, and through environmental exclusion. Steketee et al. (2021) explain that

environmental microaggressions involve "making someone's racial identity minimized or insignificant through the omission of décor, curricular, and cultural representation" (p. 1081).

Furthermore, microaggressions can also occur through *microassaults*, such as verbal or nonverbal abuse, name-calling, and bullying (Solórzano, 2010; Huber & Cueva, 2012). Additionally, it can happen through *microinvalidations*, including colorblindness, judging people's citizenship and nationality, meritocracy (Au, 2013), denying personal racism, and invalidation of the lived experiences of communities of color and other minoritized groups. These three types of microaggressions are constantly evolving and interrelated, and they occur at micro and macro levels, reinforcing oppression and perpetuating power relations and exclusion (Williams, 2020).

The normalization of microaggressions can occur in overt and covert ways (Essed, 1986, 1991) and are often difficult to recognize and quantify since they are deeply rooted and normalized in U.S. culture, religion, and sociopolitical and economic beliefs. In many cases, microaggressions do not leave visible and physical marks as evidence, yet their effects are substantial and profound and can cause both short- and long-term psychological and physiological harm to those who constantly experience them. Identifying acts of microaggressions can be challenging because this behavior is so prevalent daily that targeted individuals often experience self-doubt and question whether the offense actually occurred (Sue, 2010). The victim often self-blames and feels responsible for the offense (Carter, 2007).

The normalization of everyday microaggressions not only creates barriers for people of color and other minoritized communities to take their experiences into consideration but also reproduces diverse forms of inequalities, contributing to their repression, traumatic stress, and

exclusion while also normalizing "racist actions in ways that serve to absolve whites from any responsibility for their actions" (Embrick et al., 2017, 200).

In this dissertation, I focused on raciolinguistic, anti-migration, and nativist microaggressions (Steketee et al., 2021; Williams, 2020; El-Bialy & Mulay, 2020; Gold, 2017; Huber, 2011; Huber & Cueva, 2012; and Kwan, 2015). These acts of discrimination also manifest in multiple ways, including jokes about parents' and students' accents, language shaming, ignoring and avoiding listening to and communicating with parents who are not English-dominant, hostile and derogatory comments about students' and families' citizenship, niceness, and discriminatory discourses about families' heritage, race, and ethnicity. Microaggression can also occur in schools when cultural assimilation is enforced on emergent multilingual children and families, when negative assumptions are made about students' language proficiency and cognitive abilities, or when educational institutions normalize anti-immigration and English-only policies and practices that contribute to the lack of appropriate support and accommodation. Furthermore, microaggressions and exclusion happen through the segregation of ESL students in schools, their overrepresentation in special education, access to low-class standards, limited extracurricular participation, access to few school resources that attend students' needs, denied enrollment in a higher-rated school through the School Choice program because of language proficiency requirement and housing mobility, and a lack of representation in curricula and other school activities.

This study sheds light on the issue of mothers facing constant microinvalidation and neglect in their children's school, which can make them and their children feel invisible and treated as second-class citizens as they try to navigate the U.S. educational system without appropriate support from schools. The invisibility and constant experience with

microaggressions can cause mothers to distance themselves and avoid seeking assistance, not because of passivity or dis/engagement, but as a form of coping and self-protection from everyday discrimination and structural racism embedded in predominantly white K-12 educational institutions.

Based on the findings of this study, the normalization of microaggressions usually occurs when mothers are not given adequate opportunities to communicate, ask questions, and express their concerns and opinions. Microaggressions happen when schools ignore or dismiss mothers' and children's voices and invalidate their funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, language, dis/abilities, and immigration status experiences. Microinsults and microassaults in the classroom happen when teachers and peers belittle students' accents, racial features, language, immigration status, and family cultural backgrounds, treating emergent multilingual students as substandard, aliens, and incapable of learning. Discrimination happens when teachers and school leaders choose to disregard acts of bullying and underestimate the effects of this behavior on the bullied students' well-being, contributing to internalized racism (Speight, 2007) and negative beliefs about students' culture, heritage, language, race, ethnicity, and learning ability.

According to Roffee and Waling (2016), the failure to acknowledge and challenge acts of microaggressions can reinforce the belief among those who perpetrate them that such behavior is acceptable and allowed (p. 198). For example, in this dissertation, mothers revealed that school leaders and teachers ignored acts of microaggression in school settings, failing to address the problem with the perpetrator - in many cases, the perpetrator was the school's personnel. Additionally, mothers were denied access to information, training, and support, which created further barriers to their engagement and their children's access to education that accommodated their needs. Furthermore, Florida's current policies prohibiting discussion of diversity, equity,

and inclusion, along with its anti-migration policies, are other examples of governmental practices that normalize and accept microaggressions in schools like xenophobic microinsults, microassults, and microinvalidations towards emergent multilingual immigrant parents and children of color contributing to their invisibility and underrepresentation. As Nadal et al. (2011, 2012) pointed out, the normalization of microaggression is the root of violence, bullying, and victimization toward minoritized communities.

Burleigh and Wilson (2015) explain that while microaggressions and bullying are distinct behaviors, most microaggressions are unconscious, with the perpetrator often unaware of the potential harm. Conversely, bullying is defined as "repeated victimisation within a power-imbalanced relationship, bullying encompasses a wide range of types, frequencies, and aggression levels, ranging from teasing and name calling to physical, verbal and social abuse" (Armitage, 2021, p.1). Bullying behaviors often emerge and increase in schools when those in positions of power, such as school leadership, policymakers, teachers, other school personnel, and parents, fail to acknowledge the experiences of those who are victimized and neglect acts of microaggressions. It can be argued that bullying often begins with seemingly harmless actions, such as a harmful joke or an offensive comment, which can eventually become normalized and lead to more severe forms of bullying and school violence if not appropriately addressed. Armitage (2021) highlights that there are three main types of bullying: traditional bullying (direct physical and verbal attacks, indirect and emotional behaviors), sexual bullying (sexual harassment), and cyberbullying (excluding victims from participation in an online space and online manipulation through digital technology).

A large body of studies shows that the trivialization of microaggressions in schools, specifically bullying, can create a negative school climate, which can adversely influence

students' cognitive and behavioral development (Aldridge et al., 2018), as well as their sense of safety and school belongingness (Garver & Noguera, 2015), causing absenteeism and low academic performance (Baams et al., 2017; Al-Raqqad et al., 2017; Grinshteyn, & Yang, 2017). Additionally, microaggression can cause the phenomenon coined by Smith (2004) as "racial battle fatigue," which means that it can cause "psychological, physiological, and behavioral stress responses due to the cumulative impact of racial microaggressions" (Smith et. 2004, p.461; Franklin, 2016; Hartlep & Ball, 2019).

Normalizing microaggressions can cause mothers and their children to experience acculturation stress, inadequate sleep, and mental and physical health illnesses (Peters et al., 2017) such as high blood pressure, headaches, obesity (Browne, 2022), type 2 diabetes (Sittner et al., 2018), panic attacks, and anxiety. Microaggressions in schools also influence students' learning process, low academic persistence, cause internalized racism, self-censorship, linguistic and ethnic-racial shame, low self-esteem, anger and defensiveness, isolation, depression , substance abuse (Barbero, 2023), negative impacts on family dynamics, limited community engagement, and parent-child relationship stress (Hertz et al., 2015). Further, a significant body of research shows a link between microaggressions, school bullying victimization, and youth suicide (Park et al., 2022; Cuesta et al., 2021; Limbana et al., 2020; Hinduja & Patchin, 2019), and gun-related violence such as school mass shootings (Benbenishty et al., 2023; Astor & Benbenishty, 2018; Pontes, 2021; Lee, 2013).

Lastly, this study has highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools, revealing an increased reliance on digital platforms to communicate with parents. While the integration of technology has opened new possibilities and improved some parents' participation in their children's education, the findings also indicate negative consequences. Parents who are

not literate in English or unfamiliar with U.S. culture require additional support to navigate the educational system in Florida. Moreover, undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugee immigrant children and parents have become more invisible and hesitant to engage virtually with schools due to the connection of language and immigration status.

Furthermore, this dissertation's findings revealed a new form of microaggressions that target emergent multilingual immigrant parents, and those behaviors are even more challenging to identify, as they are easier to dismiss due to the plethora of information through technology and digital media. A limited body of research identifies this contemporary form of discrimination as digital microaggressions (Mclnroy et al., 2023) or online racial microaggressions (Eschmann, 2021; Tynes et al., 2018)

Digital microaggressions are present in online environments and can be overt and covert. Two such forms are online racism (Stewart et al., 2023) and digital linguicism, where emergent multilingual immigrant families have often been excluded from school online environments, making them feel like outsiders, aliens, second-class citizens, and ignorant. Emergent multilingual parents, in particular, are required to write in English to communicate with teachers and how teachers may respond and correct parents can be distressing and embarrassing due to parents' literacy and language barriers reinforcing the idea that they are less knowledgeable or capable than English-dominant parents. However, digital microaggressions are not limited to linguicism. Parents can also experience microassaults and exclusion from school online parenting discussions due to schools' culturally insensitive communication.

Additionally, mothers may face raciolinguistic and racialized anti-migration derogatory comments, inaccessible online information, limited online support, excessive emphasis and pressure on assimilation, and superficial or constant no response to emails and online messages.

Additionally, school personnel may have unrealistic expectations regarding migration and class, such as the assumption that all parents, especially those living in rural areas, have daily access to the internet, a computer, and other digital platforms. Furthermore, online microaggressions in schools can develop into digital threats and cyberbullying - particularly for their children and youth.

Focusing on women, Harmer and Southern (2021) explain that digital microaggressions can serve as a constant reminder of the marginalized status of women (p. 2012) and often target different intersections of women's identities. In this dissertation, for example, digital microaggression spotlights not only the mother's gender and society's Western expectations about motherhood behaviors and skills but also their other intersections, such as language, nationality, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, immigration, marital status, dis/abilities, religion, and level of education. These contemporary forms of digital microaggressions can contribute to families' invisibility and exclusion, causing the school digital divide, perpetuating the "opportunity gap, " and normalizing physical and digital injustices.

Moreover, digital microaggressions or technology-facilitated aggressions (Anderson & Wood, 2021) can lead to both conventional bullying and cyberbullying, including doxxing (online document tracing, online harassment), exposure of private messages, online hate speech, political polarization, digital shaming, parenting criticism, dissemination of false information, stalking, and impersonation in schools' digital platforms. For that reason, schools taking into account online microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations is critical to providing proper assistance to immigrant children and families who face daily fear of deportation and family separation due to their immigration status. To conclude, this study's findings revealed how

educational institutions neglect to address traditional and contemporary forms of racism and microaggressions in the classroom and other physical and virtual educational settings.

It is important for policymakers, school leaders, educators, counselors, and those in positions of power within schools to reflect on their anti-bullying prevention practices and personal biases and recognize their role in perpetuating or eradicating bullying and other forms of microaggressions in schools. It is essential for school officials to promote self-reflection and raise awareness about the issues of the trivialization of harmful jokes and other forms of in-person and digital microaggressions and how these overt and covert biases can influence the lives of children, families, school personnel, and communities.

Deconstructing the Meaning of Parental Engagement in Schools

Research has shown that parental engagement/involvement in their children's education is crucial to their development and growth. However, as Cioè-Peña (2018) pointed out, the current literature about parental engagement requires reformulation rather than merely revision, particularly regarding underrepresented multilingual immigrant families. Additionally, I also suggest that school parental engagement policies should be reevaluated. Educators, policymakers, and researchers need to consider non-traditional, non-English-only, and non-Western approaches to engaging parents from diverse linguistic, cultural, and migration status backgrounds.

This study highlights that mothers use their community's cultural wealth to participate in their children's education. They rely on their "motherhood capital" (Lo, 2016) and funds of knowledge to navigate the U.S. education system and support their children's educational journey. This is done with the goal of providing their children with better life opportunities that may not have been available in their home countries. However, Western and neoliberal norms

are implemented in U.S. schools, treating immigrant families' capitals as deficits or a "problem" rather than assets. This fails to recognize the cultural knowledge, skills, and language of these families from the Global South. Moreover, schools may not fully recognize immigrant parents' contributions and efforts when engaging with school personnel (Oliveira et al., 2021). The way in which immigrant parents comprehend and prioritize parental involvement may differ from that of English-dominant and U.S.-citizen parents who adopt conventional white, middle-class, anglophone standards (Monzó, 2016). Therefore, this study challenges the harmful myths prevalent in U.S. culture that Latinx and Caribbean immigrant parents are disengaged from their children's education (Lopez, 2013; Villenas & Deyhle, 2002; Solórzano, 1997). Instead, this study highlights mothers' invisible labor, efforts, and valuable role in their children's academic achievement.

Their children's education is a top priority for these mothers. They spend their afternoons and evenings translating homework assignments, taking adult ESL classes to communicate with teachers, utilizing digital platforms in their native language for personal studying, and assisting their children after school in a language they are also trying to learn. They use translanguaging techniques to read English books to their children at night. These mothers prepare ethnic dishes such as *arepas*, *cachapas*, and *pão de queijo* to share with their children's classmates, fostering a sense of community, ethnic pride, and belonging among them. Additionally, despite facing language barriers, invisibility, inconsistent communication from schools, and uncertainties related to their immigration status, they have established their strategies to advocate for their children, learn about their children's rights, and create a sense of community through "digital communities of care." All these are ways that mothers daily engage in their children’s education. However, schools sometimes fail to recognize it.

Culture-responsive leadership and teaching strategies are essential for avoiding perpetuating white and nativist misconceptions about "good immigrant parents." This is important not only for making parents feel welcome but also for promoting the well-being of families. Genuine parental engagement goes beyond attending non-inclusive parent-teacher meetings, volunteering, selling cookies to help the school, or chaperoning school events. Some of these practices may be considered privileges that are not accessible to all families. For example, undocumented families may hesitate to volunteer due to potential risks such as background checks the possibility of deportation and family separation, particularly in light of strict anti-migration policies in Florida. Furthermore, parents may not know about their rights and opportunities due to inconsistent and superficial school communication.

Parental engagement involves parents taking an active leadership role in their child's learning (in-person and virtually), having opportunities to share their voices, gaining knowledge about their rights through formal and inclusive training, and contributing to school decision-making. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of school officials building supportive relationships with immigrant emerging multilingual parents, as their opinions matter and should be considered. By implementing strategies that actively listen and communicate with linguistically and ethnically diverse parents while acknowledging and respecting their funds of knowledge and individual challenges, schools can become more welcoming, inclusive, and safe spaces for these families.

Lastly, it is proposed in this dissertation that educational institutions reconsider their use of technology when attempting to communicate and engage with emerging multilingual parents and their children. It is vital to prioritize digital family literacy and parental digital training to promote inclusivity, fairness, and a more welcoming school climate. However, it is equally

important to take a culturally responsive approach and acknowledge the linguistic and cultural differences and challenges that non-English proficient families may encounter. Based on this study's findings, it is important for schools to establish effective and inclusive modes of communication with families, particularly those who are non-native English speakers.

The results of this dissertation support previous studies indicating that WhatsApp has emerged as a beneficial communication platform for schools and parents (Johari et al., 2022; Wong-Villacres et al., 2019; Addi-Raccah & Yemini, 2018). WhatsApp is widely used in Latinx and Caribbean communities in the U.S. and is highly accessible, convenient, and encrypted, making it an efficient and safe tool for schools to enhance parental engagement and foster a sense of community. For instance, schools can create private WhatsApp groups for families, send multilingual announcement messages (audio, video, and text), send important school updates, and create specific private groups with parents and educators with similar interests. This approach strengthens the sense of community and belonging between schools and families. Additionally, chatbox platforms such as WhatsApp can provide parents with the opportunity to translate schools' information on their own, building a further sense of support between educators, leadership, and parents.

Unseen and Unheard: The Connection of Policies and Invisibility/Exclusion of Immigrant Families

This study's findings suggest that educational policies do not address the systemic barriers immigrant children and families face daily, such as their immigration status, contributing to the exclusion and invisibility of immigrant children, parents, and communities (Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). A contributing factor to this neglect is due to the Supreme Court's 1982 *Plyer v. Doe* policy, which restricts school personnel from inquiring about the immigration status of

children and their families during school enrollment to "protect" the privacy and confidentiality of undocumented and unauthorized students. Nonetheless, according to Figueroa (2017) and Rabin et al. (2009), neglecting to acknowledge a student's family citizenship can have detrimental consequences. This lack of communication can lead to a systemic stigma within schools, where practitioners abstain from inquiring about migration status, and families choose not to disclose their undocumented, unauthorized, asylum seeker, or refugee status as a form of protection. As a result, the struggles of these families may go unnoticed, as their fear of discrimination, deportation, and family separation keeps them hidden and living in the shadows.

This invisibility in educational settings influences immigrant students' academic development and creates a barrier to family-school partnership and parental engagement (Soutullo et al., 2016). This stigma and exclusion can also lead to students' absenteeism, acting out, internalized racism, anger, isolation, substance abuse, incarceration, early pregnancy, school dropout, and strained relationships with their parents and community. Furthermore, several studies have shown that the rise of anti-migration political rhetoric about migration in the U.S. and citizenship status of immigrant children, parents, and extended family is associated with mental health disorders (Cano et al., 2020; Barajas-Gonzales et al., 2014; Vargas et al., 2017; O'Mahony & Donnelly, 2007; Georgiades et al., 2007; Navarro & Shi, 2001), hostile school climate and students and parents lack a sense of safety (Kirksey & Sattin-Bajaj, 2021).

This neglect motivated by educational policies is a form of systemic racism and racialized anti-migration and nativist microaggression leading to students' depression, anxiety, panic attacks, suicide, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts, especially among Latinx adolescents (Querdasi & Bacio, 2021). According to Hagan et al. (2023), "there is a growing recognition that immigration status is a sociopolitical driver of mental health disparities"(p.2), and

immigrants and ethnic minorities are more prone to suicidal behaviors (Fort et al., 2018; Borges et al., 2009). The lack of discussion about families' immigration status in schools ignores students' unique academic and behavioral challenges and silences discussions about students' mental health and the connection with citizenship.

Although school programs aim to aid students in integrating into U.S. culture and improving their English acquisition and proficiency, policymakers and school personnel frequently neglect the complexities these families encounter beyond test scores and language proficiency. It is essential to acknowledge the direct relationship between the immigration status of students' families and their educational progress. Ignoring this crucial connection can result in a lack of inclusivity, a diminished sense of belonging, mobility issues, difficulty accessing basic services, and a lower overall quality of life for both children and their families.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, more than 5.1 million minors under 18 were born in the United States and have at least one parent who is an unauthorized or undocumented immigrant (Capps et al., 2016). The report noted that even though these children are U.S. citizens, they are at a higher risk for various adverse outcomes due to their parent's immigration status. That risk includes limited English proficiency, linguistic isolation, reduced socioeconomic progress, poverty, and lower preschool enrollment. There are approximately 68,000 undocumented children and youth under 17 in Florida, and 12% are not currently enrolled in K-12 education (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). This lack of communication in schools, child and parents' visibility and support in schools can lead to a "culture of fear" (Vargas et al., 2017; p. 460), normalizing anti-migration and raciolinguistic sentiments and poor communication with educators and school leaders, which can be harmful to students and families.

According to the mothers' narratives and previous studies shared in this dissertation, policymakers and schools tend to prioritize language acquisition through English-only perspectives, standardized curriculum, assessment scores, and performance while disregarding the relationship between academic development, immigration status, and overall well-being of emerging multilingual students and families (Mueller et al. 2020; Perreira & Ornelas, 2011; Brabeck & Xu, 2010). As a result, when schools fail to communicate effectively and consider the immigration status of parents and children, they also neglect their students' emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Chavez et al., 2012).

Cicchetti and Lynch (1993) highlighted that a mother's access to resources and life opportunities contributes significantly to the family dynamics and their children's progress. Their study shows that the overall well-being of children is directly linked to the circumstances of their parents. So, at the moment that educational policies, practices, and processes make parents invisible, as highlighted in this dissertation, policymakers and school personnel are also implicitly contributing to the exclusion and invisibility of their students. The mother/caretaker and child's well-being are interconnected and cannot be dissociated.

In light of this, it is essential that policymakers, school districts, principals, teachers, counselors, and staff are informed of the adverse effects of anti-immigration and "English-only" policies, as well as unrealistic Western expectations of immigrant parents, even though schools are not directly involved in these migration policies and processes. As Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) and Cicchetti & Lynch (1993) highlighted, what happens on a macro level (government, policies, educational institutions, media, mass culture) affects the micro level (communities, families, and the child).

For example, in 2023, the Florida Senate implemented *CS/CS/SV 1718: Immigration*, an anti-migration policy. Interestingly, the word "school" was never mentioned by the policymakers responsible for drafting this legislation. You may wonder how this policy affects K-12 schools and parental dis/engagement. The reality is that this policy has a profound impact on schools, parents, and children in vulnerable conditions due to their immigration status. Furthermore, this policy shows how structural racism operates covertly and systemically in schools. Despite targeting undocumented and unauthorized adults in Florida, this policy causes considerable emotional and cognitive stress on their children. Consequently, this policy influences families, school, and classroom dynamics.

According to Fernández (2016), while schools are not directly targeted by anti-migration policies and immigration reform that promote family separation and deportation, these policies still significantly and directly impact the school's structure, policies, practices, processes, and the type of services available to immigrant children. Contreras (2002) highlights that “immigration policy has always had an impact on education, especially urban education where immigrants first arrive in the largest numbers. It affects the numbers entering our schools and the rate at which they enter. It affects the physical, social, and economic well-being of children and their parents” (Contreras, 2002, p. 146). Therefore, Florida’s anti-migration policy described above may potentially result in parent detention for smuggling their children into the U.S. It also requires that employers verify parents’ immigration status, which may lead to challenges in securing employment and contributing to labor exploitation, low-wage jobs, food insecurity, family stress, parent’s limited time to support their children’s education, and in many instances, children and parent homelessness.

This policy prohibiting undocumented parents from obtaining a driver's license could hinder their efforts to engage in their children's education and transport them to various school activities. This could create additional difficulties for families with limited financial resources since public transportation in Florida is often unreliable. Moreover, parents and children may experience daily anxiety about being involved in a car accident, driving to the grocery store or a park to play, and being stopped by law enforcement and deported, which could lead to family separation and emotional distress. This policy also makes undocumented and unauthorized parents reluctant to seek safe and formal medical assistance for themselves or their children due to hospitals requiring immigration status information. Additionally, this legislation may discourage parents from enrolling their children in school, as they may fear deportation and may not fully understand their children's rights since schools do not provide guidance or communicate properly regarding parents' immigration status.

This dissertation's findings emphasize the importance of establishing effective communication channels between schools and immigrant parents living in vulnerability due to their immigration status, despite the fact that schools are not allowed to inquire about the citizenship status of students and families. Without open and culturally sensitive communication, schools may fail to comprehend the unique challenges parents face due to U.S. anti-migration policies. This dissertation is a call for reflection and ACTION, as it highlights the need for policymakers, educators, and school stakeholders to adopt an inclusive and intersectional approach to address language acquisition and the specific needs of immigrant children and families. It is crucial to understand that anti-immigration policies can negatively impact children and families in schools, and schools need to take proactive measures to address these issues. The key to addressing these challenges is communicating effectively with parents, creating a safe

space so parents can ask for support, and preventing their invisibility in the education system. Furthermore, evaluating the effects of anti-migration, anti-CRT, and anti-diversity and inclusion policies on their schools, communities, families, students, and teaching practices is essential.

It is crucial for school administrators to use their position of authority (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015) to advocate and learn about the intersection of immigration laws and immigrant families' rights, recognize the adverse effects of these policies on students' academic development and create ethical community strategies to educate teachers and school staff about this matter while protecting students and families, and creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment where immigrant parents and their children feel protected and valued (Crawford, 2017; Crawford et al., 2018, Gildersleeve et al., 2010).

Moreover, I believe that avoiding discussions about immigration status in schools contributes to a colorblind education system that fails to recognize the presence of unauthorized and undocumented families, refugees, asylum seekers, international students, and other immigrant children and parents who struggle daily from systemic discrimination and microaggressions, preventing them from seeking assistance and support due to the intersections between language, race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, gender, disabilities, religion, and other social identities. These discussions enable school officials and students to reflect holistically on their actions and biases when interacting with emergent multilingual immigrant parents and their children. Moreover, these discussions allow educators to work in solidarity with immigrant families and other historically underrepresented communities (Mangual Figueroa, 2017).

Bridging Cultural Practices and Historical Contexts in Schools

Cultural traditions have a significant influence on the promotion of community values, the appreciation of the epistemologies and ontologies of different ethnic groups, and the encouragement of respect, inclusion, and diversity in schools. However, the findings of this study highlight the importance of schools delving into multicultural education and events in depth and connecting cultural practices with their historical context to prevent the objectification of the traditions and culture of communities of color. Such approach provides opportunities for a more comprehensive discussion on the history of resistance, resilience, and efforts against racism and discrimination by underrepresented communities while preserving and respecting their culture. This is particularly crucial when introducing Afro-Latinx, Black-Caribbean, and Indigenous practices in schools, which have been historically marginalized, gendered, and objectified worldwide by christian, white, *machista*, and capitalist sentiments, leading to the objectification, tokenization, and commercial exploitation of Latinx and Caribbean traditions and gendered bodies.

It is important that educators do not simply introduce ethnic cultural practices in schools without providing their context and history. Neglecting this vital information not only diminishes the intrinsic value of these practices but also undermines the rich history of resistance that these cultural traditions symbolize within their respective communities. Latinx and Caribbean cultures are multifaceted and complex, extending far beyond dance, colorful costumes, and food. By acknowledging and exploring the history of racial, gender, and religious resistance that these cultures embody, we can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for their importance to their communities.

Furthermore, multicultural activities in schools offer an excellent opportunity to invite parents and grandparents from different linguistic and racial-ethnic backgrounds to share their lived cultural experiences. This helps to enhance the understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural heritage without resorting to stereotypes and stigmas. Additionally, it can boost parental involvement in their children's schools. Adopting this approach can assist schools in reducing biases and racism within the school environment. It also enhances the self-esteem and sense of belonging of minoritized children, youth, and parents by valuing and supporting them in navigating their multilayered social identities in the U.S. while appreciating their funds of knowledge and ethnic background.

Implications for Practice

First, it is important to acknowledge the structural challenges that educators, counselors, school administrators, and staff encounter when attempting to offer individualized support to their students and families, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Florida's educators are facing difficulties because of current anti-migration, anti-CRT, and anti-diversity policies, as well as the pandemic's impact on education. Factors such as limited resources, low salary, burnout, mandated and "one size fits all" course materials, and overcrowded classrooms frequently make it difficult for educators to provide each student and parent with the attention they require. However, this study's findings have demonstrated that incorporating a culture of hope and *carinho* (affection), culturally responsive practices, and trauma-informed strategies into educational environments can effectively help to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse families.

The experiences of the mothers in this study highlight the importance of schools engaging in translanguaging and other forms of inclusive communication, both verbal and non-

verbal, with emerging multilingual families. It is crucial to develop strategies that take into account the concerns and needs of parents rather than disregarding their perspectives and contributing to their invisibility and exclusion. These holistic approaches are especially critical when working with newcomer immigrant children and parents who may be unfamiliar with the U.S. education system, have limited proficiency, and have experienced trauma and discrimination due to their citizenship, race, ethnicity, nationality, and dis/abilities. Listening to parents, understanding their unique structural challenges, embracing their community's cultural wealth and funds of knowledge, and providing them with a safe space where they can speak and be heard are essential and fundamental human rights, regardless of their immigration status and language proficiency.

This study's findings indicate that school leadership and educators play a vital role in preventing the normalization of a school culture that perpetuates raciolinguistic, anti-migration, and nativist forms of microaggressions. In today's technologically advanced society, the banalization of freedom of speech, derogatory comments, and engaging in “teasing for fun” has become normalized. This behavior has infiltrated schools and impacted the well-being of children, families, practitioners, and the community. It is important for school personnel to stand up against the various manifestations of racism and microaggressions in educational settings, including their unconscious prejudices. This includes situations where emergent multilingual immigrant parents seek assistance from the school and are micro-invalidated and instances where children are subjected to covert forms of bullying that often go unnoticed and unaddressed. Such behavior can harm the school environment's sense of safety and belonging.

This study sheds light on the importance of culturally competent and trauma-informed counselors and translators in schools. Furthermore, mental health care providers have a

significant and valuable role in schools, particularly in light of the growing number of children and teenagers who are struggling with various mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), substance use, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and youth suicide. This study highlights the need for practical support systems and resources in schools to address the mental health challenges experienced by students and families of diverse linguistic and ethnic-racial backgrounds.

Furthermore, this study indicates that developing partnerships between school districts and local immigrant-led organizations and churches is essential to improving outcomes for emergent multilingual immigrant families. The collaboration and support of these community-led groups were instrumental in completing this study. These institutions can play a vital role in assisting schools in developing more effective culturally relevant strategies to engage with linguistically and culturally diverse families. They also provide translation and other essential forms of cultural, psychological, and migratory support to vulnerable immigrant families.

Moreover, using digital tools in schools has become crucial for parent-teacher communication, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this study has found that these technological tools can create a "digital communication gap" and digital inequality among families instead of fostering a school-family connection. This study revealed that emerging multilingual families are often excluded from utilizing these digital resources, contributing to their disenfranchisement. This results in a school digital divide, where emails, app messages, and audio recordings become a barrier for parents who are still learning English and facing technological challenges. Additionally, some parents lack access to technology throughout the day, further intensifying the problem.

Such digital tools require parents to write in English, which can be challenging for those not literate in English or their native language. As a result, parents may only express some of their concerns, fearing their difficulties articulating themselves in English and causing teachers misunderstanding. For example, a mother who struggles to understand English may not comprehend the school's voice message, resulting in adverse outcomes for the parent, child, and school. Moreover, schools do not consider parents who are hesitant to use technology due to their immigration status, lack of trust, and concerns about deportation and family separation.

In order to promote inclusion and equity in schools, it is important to provide accommodations for parents who may need more technological proficiency or are not fluent in English. School personnel need to implement culturally responsive communication strategies to engage more with emergent multilingual parents, for example, by utilizing digital chatbox platforms such as WhatsApp (Johari et al., 2022; Wong-Villacres et al.; 2019; Addi-Raccah & Yemini, 2018).

Additionally, schools' expectations for parents to use English-only standard digital platforms may pose a barrier for parents still learning English and desire in-person communication with teachers. School communication through digital technology is convenient and more time-saving, but it can also perpetuate institutionalized and raciolinguistic discrimination against non-English dominant families.

Implications for Policies

Educational policies for emergent multilingual immigrant students and their families often fail to acknowledge the influence of intersectionality on their experiences. Families struggling with English language acquisition, immigration status uncertainties, and those managing visible or invisible dis/abilities face complex and interconnected systemic challenges.

Recognizing these intersections is necessary as they collectively shape families' encounters and determine students and families' access to support and public services.

It is vital for policymakers to adopt a holistic and intersectional perspective when considering families (Garcia & Zajicek, 2022; Hankivsky & Cormier, 2019; Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019; Bishwakarma et al., 2007). While Florida's educational policies ensure equal opportunities for all students, the rhetoric of "equality for all" tends to reinforce notions of meritocracy, raciolinguistic blindness, and socioeconomic exclusion. This approach often overlooks the distinct challenges faced by historically underrepresented communities.

For instance, while Florida *Rule 6A.6-0904,7* and parental engagement guidelines in Chapter 4 promote antiracist, welcoming, caring, and inclusive discourses, the use of niceness discourses such as "when schools and families work together," "parents shall be provided training," and "access for all" creates an impression of community connection, partnership with parents, and a welcoming, safe school environment. However, the findings of this study reveal that emergent multilingual immigrant mothers and children remain invisible and are silenced daily due to one-size-fits-all policies and how the educational system is structured by those in power. As argued by Ladson-Billings (1998) and Drake & Rodriguez (2022), schools often manifest whiteness discourses through politeness, equality, and niceness discourses, thus reinforcing power relations, institutional racism, and the exclusion of those who do not conform to white, nativist, monolingual, patriarchal, and middle-class norm.

This study emphasizes the need for policymakers to re-evaluate the current mental health policies implemented in K-12 public schools. In light of the mental health challenges that students, families, and educators have faced prior and post-COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to provide schools and families with more mental health support. This can be achieved by directing

additional funding towards prevention initiatives, staff training, and the hiring of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and multilingual counselors, mental health providers, and translators within schools. These professionals can effectively support linguistically and racially diverse children and their families and serve as a bridge between schools and families. Therefore, it is important that policymakers take actions to support the mental health needs of students and families, and provide students with the resources they need to succeed.

Furthermore, providing professional development and connecting language, immigration, and mental health awareness training for teachers, school leaders, and other school personnel can have a significant benefit in schools. This will help educators gain a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by emergent multilingual immigrant families, particularly students and families who face intersecting challenges with not only language but also immigration status and dis/abilities.

Lastly, it is important for policymakers to develop innovative communication policies and strategies in schools that promote communication with parents through technology and in-person in a more inclusive and equitable manner, tailored to diverse students and families' populations. This entails investing in inclusive technologies and communication infrastructures that value multiple forms of communication, such as translanguaging, verbal, and non-verbal communication, and address the unique communication challenges faced by schools and emergent multilingual families.

Recommendation for Future Research

Based on this study's literature review and findings, I have categorized my recommendations for further research into four categories.

Children & Families. Further research is needed to examine the perspectives of emergent multilingual immigrant parents from low socioeconomic status who face immigration challenges and have children with visible or invisible disabilities.

More research is necessary to understand the impact of immigration policies on vulnerable immigrant families, including undocumented immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and international students. Additionally, further investigation is needed to examine how anti-immigration policies affect family socioeconomic status and parental involvement in schools. Understanding how immigration policies impact parents can provide valuable insight into their children's challenges in the U.S. educational system, particularly for children who live in mixed-status homes. Sometimes, a child may be a U.S. citizen while their parent has undocumented status. However, despite being born in the U.S. and holding all the rights associated with U.S. citizenship, these children who live in mixed-status homes face short and long-term adverse consequences due to anti-immigration policies that influence their non-U.S. citizen caregivers.

Anti-immigration policies in the U.S. have placed international students in vulnerable positions (Pottie-Sherman, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017, Dessoff, 2011), forcing them into exploitative jobs to avoid deportation and support their families. These policies have also negatively impacted families' socioeconomic status, mobility, and mental health - especially international students' parents who have U.S. citizen children attending K-12 public schools. There is a critical need for research to understand the experiences of international student parents and their children and the effects of anti-immigration policies on their family well-being. It is important to acknowledge that many international students become undocumented due to the lack of viable options to maintain their authorized migration status. This population is often overlooked in discussions related to immigration policies and their

impact on K-12 schools. As an international student, I advocate for more studies to shed light on the unique structural challenges faced by international students in the U.S.

Literacy, Teachers' Professional Development, and Neurodivergent Students. Further research is needed that examines the experiences of neurodivergent emergent multilingual students, particularly those who are undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugees, and how their immigration status, language, and dis/abilities affect their education in K-12 public schools.

It is also recommended to conduct further research that considers the experiences and perspectives of both pre-service and in-service teachers. It is essential to address teachers' structural challenges and the professional development opportunities available to them, particularly in math, reading, and writing, when working with neurodivergent emergent multilingual students and their families. Additionally, more research is needed on counselors' experiences in K-12 schools and their support of emerging multilingual immigrant families.

Emerging Multilingual Families & Mental Health. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health of families, causing a rise in stress, anxiety, depression, youth suicide, and other mental health conditions. Further research is needed to understand better the mental health of K-12 emerging multilingual immigrant students and families. Furthermore, how K-12 schools adopt a holistic approach to support immigrant students and families' well-being.

Experiences of LGBTQ+ emerging multilingual immigrant parents. Lastly, during the recruitment phase of this study, Latinx and Caribbean fathers raised concerns about their potential exclusion from this study. One father, for instance, inquired about including single fathers and parents who fulfill both Western traditional motherhood and fatherhood roles. Upon reflecting on these concerns and conducting a thorough literature review, it is suggested that

future research should consider the experiences of emergent multilingual fathers and LGBTQ+ emergent multilingual immigrant parents who do not fit binaural traditional roles. The insights gained from the LGBTQ+ community could be particularly valuable in addressing the educational challenges confronted by their children, particularly in Florida, where anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is on the rise.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study is its small sample size, making it challenging to understand the lived experiences of immigrant emergent multilingual families comprehensively. Additionally, this study only included interviews with a limited number of Latinx and Caribbean undocumented refugees, asylum seekers, international students, and Hispanic, Brazilian, and Haitian mothers. It is necessary to consider these factors when interpreting the findings of this study.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Haitian mothers were interviewed in Portuguese, English, and through translanguaging practices due to the researcher's language limitations in Haitian Creole. Throughout the recruitment process, I learned that many Haitian families migrated to Brazil before moving to the U.S. and learned to speak Portuguese as their second, third, or fourth language. Accordingly, I conducted interviews with the mothers in Portuguese, which is the researcher's native language and English. In addition, due to language limitations and recruitment challenges, monolingual Haitian mothers were not included in the study. Furthermore, I could only access a limited number of immigrant mothers whose children had been diagnosed with visible and invisible disabilities and speech delays.

Another limitation of this dissertation was that I did not address a specific case of an undocumented Haitian teenager (1 ½ generation) who had passed the age to be in high school.

Due to educational policies, she was not allowed to attend traditional high school because of her age. Since she was not enrolled in K-12 school, I did not discuss her story in this dissertation. However, there is a need for more studies that address the challenges faced by Black and Brown undocumented teenagers who have passed the age to attend traditional schooling. Their stories matter and need to be heard.

Lastly, using arts-based methodologies presented a valuable opportunity for historically underrepresented communities to share their voices and lived experiences in educational settings. In addition, arts-based methodologies challenge Western and positivist methodologies. However, it is essential to note that utilizing arts during virtual interviews in research can present some difficulties and restrictions, especially if the study focuses on vulnerable populations. Due to this, some mothers were unable to create their artwork. I hope that future researchers can develop new strategies to connect with historically underrepresented communities and conduct multilingual studies while incorporating virtual arts-based methodologies.

Researcher Reflexivity

Connecting Critical Theory & Practice

This study emphasizes the significance of integrating critical theories and their tenets into educational policies, practices, processes, and professional development for school leaders, educators, and staff. It is also crucial to incorporate these approaches into institutional discussions and spaces where decisions are made regarding multilingualism, multiculturalism, immigration, curriculum and instruction, and the rights of children and their families. These political spaces play a significant role in shaping public policies and determining families' access to equitable education, safety, employment, housing, food security, physical and mental healthcare support, transportation, and other opportunities for future life prospects. For instance,

intersectionality - one of the fundamental tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) - should be the basis for decisions to ensure families receive an equitable education.

However, this study and previous research highlighted that these spaces of power are often systemic, structured, and created in ways that exclude linguistically and ethnically diverse parents and children with limited financial resources and vulnerable immigration status, causing them to be invisible and excluded. Despite the current efforts of Florida's nativist right-wing government to ban discussions about CRT and address issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in school settings, this attempt of avoiding, disconnecting, and silencing these issues with a whiteness-centered agenda is not the solution. In fact, it causes more harm to children, families, schools, and communities as a whole.

The mothers' experiences in this study revealed that educational and other political spaces are designed to silence the voices of emergent multilingual immigrant children and families from the Global South who do not fit white nativist supremacist standards and expectations of "good immigrants." This occurs despite the niceness rhetoric used in U.S. policies and political discourse regarding equity for all. The reality is that equitable treatment for all is impossible if the fundamental human rights of historically underrepresented communities are disregarded while privileging those who are white, middle-class, U.S. citizens, and English-speaking monolingual. The lack of representation of emergent multilingual immigrant children and families in those spaces has been noted in extensive previous research studies and contributes to the exclusion, segregation, and neglect of children, families, and communities of color (Padía & Traxler, 2021; Cioè-Peña, 2018; Alexander, 2018; Romero, 2011).

Meanwhile, those who conform to the white status quo are often valued, heard, and represented, which can have significant implications for the development and life opportunities

of students living on the margins. This systemic neglect disrupts the family and community ecosystem and threatens students, parents, parents, and broader families' emotional, physical, cognitive, and socioeconomic well-being.

Furthermore, this study's findings highlighted the importance of connecting critical theories with the real-life experiences of historically underrepresented children and families (another tenet of CRT). However, this task is complex and requires listening to the families experiences the U.S. educational system. Despite the increase of neoliberal approaches in public educational institutions, dismantling negative deficit framing ingrained in schools towards emergent multilingual students and parents (and other communities of color), Western unrealistic expectations, and discriminatory measures such as anti-migration and English-Only policies are crucial to initiating this change. These policies and processes have been found to cause harm to students and families from limited financial resources and vulnerable immigration status. Consistently following up with and caring about families' voices and experiences, regardless of their language proficiency or immigration status, is critical for this initiative to succeed.

Implementing critical theories in educational institutions, like CRT, allows historically underrepresented parents and children to be heard and their human rights to be considered. Additionally, it encourages school leaders and educators to reflect on their biases, actions, and decisions to create a safe and nurturing environment for vulnerable children and families. This process of critical thinking and self-reflection is called by Pinar (1994) as *currere*, where educators evaluate and reflect on their past, present, and possible future actions and experiences to create a more supportive school environment where schools and families work together holistically.

Such an environment would allow families to share their experiences and seek school support without fear of microaggressions, exclusion, or other forms of hidden violence. Moreover, these critical theories promote the importance of embracing and respecting families' funds of knowledge, heritage, and their community's cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). By doing so, students and their families are perceived as an asset rather than a deficit, second-class citizens, or a "problem," effectively promoting a sense of belonging in schools.

As highlighted by Barajas-Gonzales et al. (2018), "feeling safe is fundamental for healthy child development" (p. 3), which includes feeling protected, heard, and supported, particularly in the face of persistent stressors such as constant fear of deportation, family separation, housing and food instability due to anti-immigration policies, and constant raciolinguistic discrimination.

Examining families' perspectives through intersectional lenses means that policymakers and practitioners take into account not only students' and parents' language proficiency development but also how citizenship, race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, gender, ability/disabilities, religion, sexuality, age, educational level, and other social identities shape parents and students' experiences and involvement in schools.

Broadening Horizons: Theoretical Development Beyond U.S. Concepts and Borders

This dissertation is grounded in conceptual theoretical frameworks, including Community Cultural Wealth, Critical Race Theory, and Borderlands Theory, as discussed in Chapter 1. While these frameworks have informed this study and my personal growth as a scholar, it is important to acknowledge their limitations and shortcomings. Additionally, some of these frameworks were developed with a focus on the U.S. context and may not fully address the unique challenges faced by other immigrant communities, such as Haitian communities, refugees, asylum seekers, mixed migration families, international students, and immigrant

families with children who have invisible dis/abilities. For instance, while Borderlands Theory and LatCrit were used in this study to explore the experiences of Latinx and Caribbean immigrant communities, it is important to note that these frameworks were originally created focusing on the Chicanx and Latinx communities in the U.S.

Despite their limitations, the frameworks used in this study have shed light on the social justice issues faced by the emergent multilingual immigrant community in Florida. While these communities may not be physically living on the U.S./Mexico border, they are crossing everyday multiple forms of physical, invisible, and structural borders due to their social identities, language, and immigration status. Based on that, I propose future researchers to consider these limitations and expand their analysis and research to explore immigration, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, and dis/abilities issues beyond the U.S. context. As an emerging scholar, I am continuously learning about these limitations. I understand that this process evolves over time, and I am also learning along the way. I aim to expand my critical analysis and broaden my knowledge throughout future studies and community-based research projects.

My Research Learning Journey on Immigration and Family Dynamics

I confess that finding mothers who were willing to participate in this study was challenging. Language and cultural barriers are not the only obstacles that emergent multilingual immigrant mothers face in Florida's K-12 public schools. Those challenges include mothers' lack of trust due to their immigration status, constant stress and fear of deportation and family separation, political and immigration trauma, and self-protection against everyday structural racism and microaggressions. As a researcher, it was my responsibility to gain their trust and provide a safe environment for all research participants.

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I received messages from Hispanic-speaking mothers who had seen my research flyer on Facebook and contacted me via WhatsApp to participate in the study. It was heartening to learn that some mothers I had not met had even printed the flyer and displayed it in their children's school. I have to admit that I found it challenging to connect with the Brazilian and Haitian communities while conducting this study, mainly because of their immigration status and migration history in the U.S.

As an emerging Brazilian scholar, I aimed to bring the voices of the diverse multilingual Latin American and Caribbean communities into my dissertation. Throughout my academic journey, I have come across studies that overlook non-Spanish-speaking Latinx communities as part of the larger Latinx population. This approach is problematic and can be insensitive to non-Spanish-speaking communities. For this reason, I prioritized incorporating the perspectives of other communities from Latin America and the Caribbean who speak different languages. Unfortunately, due to my linguistic limitations, I could not include the experiences of Latinx and Caribbean Indigenous communities. Researchers, policymakers, educators, and community members need to acknowledge the diversity of Latinx and Caribbean communities, acknowledge their voices, respect their history, and identify them (us) accurately.

Throughout this dissertation, I came to understand the importance of recognizing the unique struggles and history of the Haitian people. During the recruitment process, I learned that it can be considered disrespectful and colorblind to label the Haitian community as Caribbean, Creole, and Black. Such categorizations can lead to dismissing their efforts to fight against racial and ethnic oppression in Haiti and the United States. By grouping them solely under the Caribbean community, researchers can neglect their particular identity and history of resistance, as well as their efforts to become the first nation to abolish slavery. From this study, I learned

that respecting the Haitian community's preferred identification and understanding their history is crucial. This approach is essential during the research process and for supporting Haitian students and families in K-12 public schools.

Throughout the recruitment process, I discovered that Facebook and WhatsApp can be powerful tools for building connections with Latinx and Caribbean communities. By utilizing these platforms, I gained valuable insight into the varied "digital communities of care" formed by supportive mothers and allies who work together to assist multilingual immigrant families facing systemic challenges in the U.S. In addition, I was surprised to learn about several community-based social justice organizations that provide aid to immigrant families living in different areas of Florida, such as rural, semi-urban, and urban regions. These organizations and religious institutions were instrumental to this study, as they provided me with diverse perspectives and helped me connect with families from different parts of Florida.

For instance, these organizations taught me that if I want to communicate effectively with the community, I need to use digital platforms like WhatsApp, which is more commonly used by their communities, instead of formal messaging methods like emails or text messages. Furthermore, when I encountered difficulties, I contacted these organizations to ask questions about their culture, racial identification, and other unique cultural, language, and ethnic-racial perspectives. This approach and connection with the community-led organizations helped me ensure that I respected the cultural backgrounds of my research participants, especially during my data analysis. Through this experience, I have also realized the significance of digital communities of care in research and the need for schools and universities to connect with community-based organizations and ethnic churches to support emergent multilingual immigrant families. These organizations have always played a critical role in Latinx and Caribbean

communities, providing a sense of belonging to immigrant families by connecting them to their language, culture, and home country. Therefore, to better assist these families, building such partnerships is crucial in schools and research.

Based on my experience conducting this study, I have learned that translanguaging, as proposed by Flores (2014), can be a powerful methodological tool in multilingual qualitative research. By practicing translanguaging, researchers can establish meaningful connections with research participants and dismantle power dynamics. Initially, I was concerned about my limited fluency in Spanish, which Brazilian Portuguese speakers commonly refer to as *Portunhol* (a blend of Portuguese and Spanish). However, this experience has taught me that acknowledging our limitations and trying to communicate in our participants' native language without interfering with the study is not a drawback but a strength in multilingual research. It also reflects empathy and respect for our research participants' cultural backgrounds and funds of knowledge.

Translanguaging was an essential aspect of this study, so much so that Hispanic mothers who were interviewed reached out to me afterward to share new stories and send me WhatsApp text messages. Also, Haitian mothers invited me to join their virtual WhatsApp prayer group, connecting me with other Haitian mothers living in the Dominican Republic and Brazil who also used translanguaging during their prayers. This study highlights the significance of using translanguaging not only as a methodology but also as a community tool that can be effectively employed in K-12 public schools, higher education, and research. Utilizing translanguaging can help to build relationships between families, schools, policymakers, and researchers.

At the start of each interview, I felt compelled to share my own story as an emergent multilingual immigrant in the U.S. and explain my purpose in conducting this study. This approach helped me earn the trust of the mothers who faced challenges due to their immigration

status and political trauma. As a result, we built a safe space where they felt comfortable sharing their stories and experiences.

Regarding the art-based pieces, some mothers were thrilled about utilizing art to express their experiences. To my surprise, I even encountered situations where mothers had their children, nieces, and nephews participate in creating artwork to convey their emotions and feelings as multilingual students in K-12 public schools in Florida. Unfortunately, I am unable to share their artwork due to their age and IRB guidelines. On the other hand, some mothers preferred to share their experiences verbally as they felt shy or lacked the time to produce something artistic.

During this study, I had the opportunity to understand the realities of immigrant mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic by utilizing arts-based methodologies and conducting virtual interviews. However, some mothers were juggling to keep their newborns from crying during the Zoom interviews despite their eagerness to participate. In light of this situation, I decided not to request their artwork and instead conducted interviews and follow-up through WhatsApp. My experience has taught me that ethics in research (axiology) and empathizing with participants and their realities are paramount during data collection.

After successfully connecting with Hispanic mothers, I turned my attention to the Brazilian and Haitian communities. During this process, I had informal conversations with several mothers that often lasted more than 30 minutes. Brazilian mothers shared their experiences with me in Portuguese. Despite my best efforts to assure them that their input would be kept confidential, they chose not to participate in this study due to concerns about fear of immigration and deportation. However, they recognized the importance of sharing their insights and recommendations with me to help other immigrant mothers navigate the challenges of

parenting and education in the U.S. These informal conversations taught me in so many ways and highlighted the unique challenges that mothers face when sharing their stories and their barriers in participating in research. Also, this experience taught me that digital platforms such as WhatsApp can be powerful tools during data collection, especially when working with vulnerable communities that fear deportation and do not want to engage in formal interviews.

As I went through the recruitment process, I realized that the Haitian community values privacy. When I tried to share my flyer on Facebook groups, I was met with rejection. I also tried reaching out to Haitian church leadership and higher education student groups, but unfortunately, I have not received a response. Reflecting on this study and writing memos, I realized that their refusal had several historical and political reasons. Nonetheless, I continued to focus on recruitment since there is a gap in the literature examining the current experiences of Haitian communities in the U.S. However, this process taught me the importance of taking a step back and reflecting. To better understand the Haitian culture, diaspora, and history, I needed to learn how the Haitian community ethnically and racially identifies themselves in the U.S. I also had to stop and learn more about the social conflicts between being a Latinx, being Caribbean, and being Haitian. It was necessary for me to learn about the history and sociopolitical conflicts between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Upon careful examination of the flyer and self-reflection, I realized that the flyer did not cater to the Haitian community. This realization made me feel embarrassed and disappointed in myself. As a result, I decided not to share the flyer with the Haitian community during recruitment, as I did not want to make them feel underrepresented. During the recruitment process, I learned how important it is for researchers to ensure that the communities we recruit are well-represented in the flyers and other recruitment materials. In addition, I learned that even

advocates for human rights and social justice make mistakes, and acknowledging those mistakes is an important part of my own development as a researcher.

To reflect on my experiences, I created a series of analytical memos and a research diary. Self-reflection was fundamental to my development as a researcher and activist. Memos were vital to my growth as a critical thinker, scholar, and emerging writer.

Navigating the Writer's Dilemma: Insider vs. Outsider Perspectives

Interviewing, listening to, and writing about the experiences of undocumented, refugee, and asylum-seeker families was quite a challenge for me emotionally and mentally. This was mainly because anti-migration policies and daily microaggressions heavily influenced their lives. It was emotionally challenging, not because of the actual writing but because of my positionality in the United States.

At first, I struggled because I did not want to focus solely on language acquisition, ESOL, and bilingual educational programs. It was essential for me, as a researcher, to examine mothers' experiences from an intersectional perspective. Language is just one element of this intersection. As an emergent multilingual immigrant, I know immigrants' unique challenges and experiences in schools beyond language barriers. However, structural racism and xenophobia often make these challenges invisible. An intersectional perspective is necessary to understand these structural barriers families with limited financial resources face.

As I delved into the topic of school communication and parental engagement, it became clear that I could not fully address the challenges faced by immigrant mothers without also considering the impact of immigration status and anti-migration policies that influence schools and mothers' daily experiences. Factors such as access to housing, employment, healthcare, mental health support, and economic conditions that affect their access to transportation to take

their children with dis/abilities to school significantly influence mothers' participation in their children's education. Therefore, examining mothers' school experiences requires a deeper understanding of how these structural barriers affect their access to communication and engagement with schools.

Another struggle for me was that Western researchers, U.S. culture, and mass media tend to portray Central and South American and Caribbean *mujeres* and *mães* as passive, uneducated, hypersexualized, and victims, focusing on their (our) deficits instead of their (our) strengths. This perpetuates negative stereotypes about women and mothers from the Global South. As a Brazilian woman of color born and raised in the Global South, obtaining a doctorate from a U.S. university was essential to me to break away from this path in my writing. I hope I was able to achieve that.

Lastly, I want to emphasize that the Latinx and Caribbean *mulheres* collaborating on this study are *guerreiras* (warriors). Despite their limited resources and language proficiency, they have dedicated themselves to protecting and advocating for their children's rights. The mothers in this study showed how they use their culture, language, community cultural wealth, non-Western motherhood capital, leadership skills, and funds of knowledge to advocate for their families. To provide their children with a better education and future, some mothers in this study escaped political, physical, emotional, and gender-based violence. They walked from South America to the U.S. They crossed the U.S. border on foot or through a river, escaping from the violence of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) while carrying and protecting their children on their backs and five days without food.

All their efforts illustrate their strength and determination as mothers and women who fight for their children daily. As a Latina and researcher, I was committed to conveying their voices, experiences, and recommendations.

To conclude, this dissertation is not just a study about Latinx, Caribbean, and Haitian mothers - it is a study WITH mothers. Their trust and willingness to share their stories made this study possible.

Future Goals: Share and Giving Back

As discussed in Chapter 3, my objective is to share the findings of this study with the communities that have supported me, as well as with mothers and the broader community. However, I understand that the traditional format of a dissertation may not be inclusive and accessible to the general public. Therefore, I intend to develop a strategy that presents this study in a language that is non-academic, inclusive, and understandable to the community, educators, and other organizations working with immigrant emergent multilingual families.

This study has shown me the immense potential of technology in communicating and engaging with communities in a meaningful and accessible way. My aim is to communicate the results through various digital channels such as reading, writing, audio, and interactive platforms, and discussions here the community can share their experiences, give feedback, or provide recommendations through a possible website and podcast. Furthermore, my goal is to make sure that mothers can easily access and share these results with their own communities, extended families, children's schools, and beyond through free and accessible digital platforms. Ultimately, this is a way of giving back to the community while also showing respect for their stories and appreciation for the valuable knowledge they have shared with me.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the major findings of this study. I highlighted the importance of implementing critical theory and intersectionality in educational policies, practices, and processes in K-12 schools, including in the professional development of school personnel. I discussed how anti-migration and English-only policies can negatively impact the development and engagement of children and their parents. Furthermore, I examined the normalization of microaggressions in schools, the significance of deconstructing the meaning of parental engagement, and the need for schools to provide better support for emerging multilingual immigrant parents.

This chapter provides practical and policy implications for policymakers, school leaders, teachers, counselors, and other school staff, as well as recommendations for future research. I conclude with self-reflection about my experience conducting this study and the valuable lessons learned through connecting with digital communities of care and community-based organizations in Florida, the interactions with the mothers, and analyzing the data and reporting the findings.

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APPENDIX A:
MOTHERS' MULTILIINGUAL ORIGINAL QUOTES
(Portuguese, Spanish, and English)

Janaina, Brasil (Português)	Eu acho que as escolas deveriam ser mais humanas. Eu ainda eu acho que o ser humano ainda é a transformação de muita coisa nesse mundo. *Background: Here Janaina is sharing about how schools now are overusing technology and disregarding the human interaction between school-student-parent.*
Maria, Venezuela (Español)	Siento que muchas veces nosotros, los latinos, estamos escondidos en un rincón. Donde vivo, muchas veces somos mayoría, pero no nos escuchan. Necesitamos que nos escuchen también. Ojalá las escuelas tuvieran alguien que pudiera hablar español, ya que la mayoría de los estudiantes son latinos. No quiero un trato especial, pero me gustaría que alguien nos explicara las cosas para que podamos entenderlas, sobre todo en matemáticas y traducción de documentos importantes. Mi hijo y yo nos esforzamos por aprender inglés, pero no es algo que podamos aprender rápidamente. Su cerebro funciona de manera diferente. Si es difícil para mí, también lo es para un niño.
Nadage, Haiti (Português)	Eu entrei aqui pela fronteira com as minhas três filhas a pé e com a minha filha de 12 anos com autismo nas costas. Hoje estamos aqui sem os papéis. Eu gostaria que a escola pudesse ter alguém para ajudar mais os imigrantes, tipo assim, mais como serviços sociais. Eu não consigo falar bem se não tiver alguém que fale Crioulo na escola. Minhas filhas que também estão aprendendo inglês, tiveram que ir comigo na escola para me ajudar a me comunicar e matricular minha filha com autismo na escola. Demorou três meses. Aqui, não tem serviço social dentro das escolas. Quando imigrantes como eu chegam aqui, eles quase não têm dinheiro. Eles não podem alugar uma casa. Eu não tenho permissão para trabalhar. Eles deveriam ajudar quando uma mãe tem um filho com necessidades especiais. Às vezes, eu perguntava para a escola se eles conheciam alguma organização que pudesse ajudar crianças imigrantes com autismo. Eles me disseram para ir em um lugar, mas quando eu cheguei lá, ninguém sabia de nada! As escolas deveriam ajudar as crianças que não têm documentos, para que elas possam ir para a faculdade quando elas terminarem os estudos. Aqui você não pode fazer nada, se você não tiver os papéis. Você não pode ir para uma faculdade quando você terminar de estudar.

Lopez, República Dominicana (Español)	Mi hijo tuvo problemas con el maestro. Se quejó de que el maestro fue muy grosero con él. Le dije a mi hijo: "Sé fuerte. Sé un hombre. Sólo obedece. No te metas en ningún problema". En este sistema, escuchamos lo mismo una y otra vez. Necesitamos ser fuertes; Necesitamos avanzar. Como tantos otros, te quedas tan absorbido por ese personaje que ni siquiera puedes recordar los sentimientos que te rodean. Aquí en Estados Unidos, el corazón se te enfría. Mi hijo lloraba constantemente cuando regresaba de la escuela. Hubo un día que no pude soportarlo más y le escribí al maestro. El maestro me dijo que el problema era mi hijo. Le respondí y le dije que iba a programar una cita con el consejero. Después de múltiples intentos fallidos de comunicarme con el departamento de consejería, opté por visitar la escuela en persona. Ese día descubrí que el maestro estaba haciendo lo mismo con otros estudiantes latinos. Llegamos a casa mi esposo y yo un poco derrotados porque esta persona pasaba seis horas con mi hijo todos los días. Esto me hizo sentir que fallé con mi hijo. Mi hijo tenía razón, pero no lo escuché. Este país te está cambiando a ti y a tu corazón. Poco a poco te acostumbras a que te maltraten. A veces nos decimos a nosotros mismos: "¡Ah, lo que sea! Simplemente ignóralo. Tenemos que aguantarlo porque somos inmigrantes".
Margarita, Colombia (Español)	Ellos no están preparados para interactuar con familias y la falta de traductor limita su capacidad para entendernos. Por ejemplo, me siento un poco frustrada porque el método que me han enseñado en Colombia es totalmente diferente a los métodos que usan aquí. Me dijeron que mi hija en segundo grado tomaría un examen de ESOL, pero nunca supe cuándo lo haría. Unos meses más tarde descubrí que ella hizo el examen, pero nadie de la escuela se comunicó conmigo. Hoy tiene dificultades con la lectura y la escritura. Me siento frustrada porque intento ayudarla, pero no puedo leer en inglés. A veces paso la tarde y la noche entera ayudándola en una tarea. Intento traducir y ver vídeos en YouTube. Me siento frustrada porque como no conozco los sonidos de las palabras, no sé decirlas bien. También siento que existe una desconexión entre mi hija y la maestra. Ellos deberían estudiar cuáles son las necesidades de los padres que no hablan inglés. Si nos estudian o nos escuchan, verán claramente: "Estas son nuestras necesidades como padres y estas son nuestras limitaciones", pero no hay comunicación.
Anair, Brasil, (Português)	Eu sempre me sinto no escuro em relação à educação da minha filha. Aqui você não recebe nenhum *feedback*. Eu não tenho ideia do que a minha filha está vendo ou aprendendo lá na escola. Eu não sei nada sobre o que está acontecendo lá! Eu não tenho contato com os alunos, com os professores, ou com outros pais. Na minha opinião, o envolvimento dos pais nas escolas dos seus filhos é tão importante. Eu já estive na escola. Eu pedi para falar com a professora porque eu

	quero saber como está minha filha indo na escola, mas até hoje eu não consegui falar com eles.
Ana, Brasil (Português)	Ele me disse para eu não me preocupar com isso, porque português é muito parecido com o espanhol e a escola está acostumada a receber crianças imigrantes. Dois meses depois, numa reunião dos pais, eu contei para a professora que a minha filha não foi alfabetizada em inglês. A professora ficou chocada! Ela pediu desculpas e me disse: "*What? Why nobody told me that?* É por isso que ela não fala nas aulas! *I thought she was quiet*." Com a ajuda do meu marido, que foi meu tradutor, eu respondi:"Claro! She is quiet because ela não fala e não entende inglês." Sabe de uma coisa? Eu acho a história da minha filha muito interessante. Cinco anos atrás, ela não sabia falar uma palavra de inglês! Hoje ela terminou o ano letivo dela entre as dez finalistas do campeonato nacional de robótica. Essa conquista é 100% mérito dela e não da escola. Ela acreditou nos *skills* dela em matemáticas e apesar dela não saber inglês, ela provou para ela mesma que ela seria uma aluna de sucesso aqui nos Estados Unidos.
Ana, Brasil (Português)	O grande problema é quando você tem que ir para uma reunião, e você não entende nada. Aí, você fica lá só olhando. Você não sabe sobre o que eles estão falando. Eles poderiam traduzir ou dar uma cópia dos slides para a gente, para que a gente possa traduzir com antecedência. Se todas as regras da escola estivessem escritas para nós, isso nos ajudaria muito. Porque quando a gente tenta acessar o site da escola, as informações não estão lá! Se a gente tivesse essas informações nas mãos, isso nos ajudaria absurdamente! Principalmente nas reuniões de fim de ano, porque eles explicam a importância dos GPAs e os pontos para eles irem para a faculdade. Faça algum material para mim, por favor! Escolas, por favor, faça uma pastinha para nós!
Ana, Brasil (Português)	Eu me senti ignorante. Eu me senti culpada e extremamente infeliz. Depois disso, não tive mais condições de ligar para a escola ou buscar minha filha mais cedo, caso ela precisasse. Eles não oferecem nenhum canal de comunicação para quem não fala inglês, entendeu? Nada, absolutamente nada. Eu comecei a fugir da escola. Na hora de buscar minha filha, eu estacionava o carro bem longe, para que ninguém pudesse me ver.
Ophelie, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	Let me explain because each of them [undocumented, asylum seekers, and refugee immigrant parents] has different problems and issues. You must be able to put yourself in their shoes to understand them because they encountered several challenges during their journey to the United States. Some of them have been raped, and some of them got hurt by others during their trip. When they arrived in the United States, some of them were put in jail. Some mothers were seven, five, and six months pregnant. They don't see any

	doctors, and some of them are homeless. They came at a critical time when so many people lost their jobs due to the pandemic
Anair, Brasil (Português)	Os professores vêem o *bullying*, mas eles não fazem nada. Ela fala que eles já são acostumados com isso. Teve uma vez, que ela disse uma palavra incorreta e todos, inclusive o professor dela, ficou sorrindo dela. Ela chegou em casa chorando e acabada! Ela ficava dizendo: “Poxa, até a professora que é uma autoridade na sala de aula e que deveria me defender estava rindo de mim”. Os professores vêem os alunos sofrendo *bullying*, mas eles não fazem nada. Então, minha filha tem que fingir que ela não vê. Ela precisa fingir que está tudo bem, ou ela vai sofrer *bulllying* ainda mais. Aqui nos Estados Unidos, eles normalizam o *bullying*. Eles normalizam tudo. Na escola dela, os alunos negros muitas vezes precisam se afirmar por meio do grito e da briga para que eles possam ser respeitados. Por exemplo, ela me disse que na sala de aula dela tem um menino que tem autismo. Os outros meninos frequentemente fazem o *bullying* com ele. Os professores vêem, mas eles não fazem nada. Eu perguntei para ela: “Porque que você não fala com ele, já que ele não tem ninguém?" Ela me respondeu: "Mãe, todo mundo que é amigo de um aluno que sofre *bullying* também vai sofrer ainda mais. Eu não estou pronta para que isso aconteça comigo novamente!” Então, ela tem que fingir que está tudo bem para poder se proteger.
Madeleine, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	I feel so embarrassed even to speak Creole because people would ask, what are you speaking? Is that Chinese or Mexican, or what is that? I heard at school that Haitians are dirty. You don’t know how to speak English. Look at her hair. Why do they dress the way that they dress? Why do they talk so loudly? Why do they have that look on their face? Why do they look like they are always angry?
Angela, Brasil (Português)	O cabelo do meu filho é muito claro e enrolado. Um dia, uma estudante começou a dizer que ele tem o cabelo ruim. Essa menina disse para ele: “Você nunca vai ser um americano! Você é feio! Você não é inteligente! Você é burro!" Chegou num ponto que um dia ela se aproveitou quando ele caiu enquanto ele estava pulando corda, para ir lá e pisar nas costas dele. Menina! Esse menino se levantou, e já chegou batendo nela. Essa garota entrou na cabeça dele de um jeito, que ele começou a me pedir para alisar o cabelo dele! E eu não entendia o porque isso estava acontecendo! Mas foi porque ele estava sofrendo *bullying* na escola. As pessoas aqui nos Estados Unidos vêem nós latinos, de uma maneira diferente. Por exemplo, essas duas fotos me representam. A primeira foto mostra eu, no meio do caos. Eu tento manter a calma e mostrar para os meus filhos que a mãe deles está no controle. A segunda foto é meu filho recebendo um prêmio na escola. Este prêmio me mostrou que estamos no caminho

	certo. Apesar de todos os problemas, não tem sentimento melhor do que você saber que você está criando um filho que é reconhecido por sua integridade.
Isabel, Venezuela (Español)	Tres estudiantes en el aula hablan español y los demás hablan inglés. Mi hija me dijo que su maestra trata mal a los que hablan español. Ella notó la diferencia entre cómo la maestra la trataba tanto a ella como a sus dos amigas y cómo trataba al resto de los niños americanos. Un día mi hija estaba enferma y no pudo asistir a la escuela. La maestra empezó a decir cosas malas de mi hija delante de los demás niños. Sólo porque seamos de Venezuela no significa que seamos malas personas
Janaina, Brasil (Português)	As escolas perto da minha casa têm as notas ruins. Eu queria colocar meus filhos em uma *Charter School* perto de minha casa, porque elas tem notas melhores. Eu tive que colocar meu nome no sorteio. Não sei se é preconceito, porque eu não tenho o conhecimento suficiente sobre isso. Mas essa escola não facilita as coisas! Eu descobri que a maioria dos alunos dessa escola são Indianos. Os Indianos são estudantes muito inteligentes. Eles são muito bons em matemática. Sabe, eu achei muito difícil para uma mãe brasileira que não é persistente, sabe! A primeira pergunta que eles me fizeram foi: "Seus filhos falam inglês?" Quando você diz não, eles automaticamente te dizem: "É melhor você primeiro matricular seu filho em uma escola pública normal e ficar lá um pouco." Faça uma imersão no inglês e depois você tenta aqui novamente.
Ophelie, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	Haitians do not see themselves as African Americans or Blacks. They see themselves as Caribbeans... (pause, smile, and she corrects herself). No! They see themselves as Haitians. As a Haitian mother living in the U.S., I am not going to ask that schools teach children Haitian history. I am not going to ask that. However, when they recognize Black History Month and Hispanic Month, if they can incorporate during the event not only the history and culture of African Americans and Hispanics but also the history of Haiti, the history of our different flags, and our heroes, it will be great! The Haitian population is also part of America. Everybody knows about Che Guevara and the great Hispanic leaders. It would be great if they could share some of our Haitian heroes and how they were the first to break the slavery cycle.
Madeleine, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	The ESOL classes that they put Haitian children in are more for Spanish-speaking children. I guess they figured the Haitians were not too far from the borders with the Spanish. I feel like if they had a translator, someone who could speak Creole or even reach out to someone Haitian to translate could help schools better understand their Haitian students, why their students act the way they do, and how they are feeling. Instead, they give the Haitian children a

	Spanish teacher who only really speaks Spanish and does not understand my Creole. I feel bad for Haitian kids… because it's either English or Spanish, which is unfair. I feel like they should have a translator there or someone who at least speaks or understands our language to help with that language barrier. Because I feel like a lot of the kids who are struggling would not be struggling. Here, a Haitian person is abnormal because they were never taught that in school until later in high school. They talked about random education, but we were the first to get freedom from slavery. Teaching about Haiti in high school is way too late in life.
Madeleine, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	I feel that you can help our community by trying to really understand us. Have a counselor to be able to speak with the students. Even if you feel you are doing a good job, have a counselor speak to students once a week to get a better understanding: "Hey, are you managing, okay? Are you learning? Is there something we can help you with? Getting a translator. The translator, for me, is the most important part because I feel like that is the biggest barrier for any Haitian parent and child. I feel like the translator is the biggest part for us. Doing different activities with us to understand our culture better. We want to understand you guys, too. As far as expectations, when it comes to school, I feel like children just show up because they need attendance. Having a translator and a counselor that explains: "You have to learn English. Learn math. Learn the reading." Also, making them feel like you care is so important. I feel like schools throw on the ESOL teacher, even though the teacher does not understand us and our culture. Give us time to explain ourselves instead of judging us. This judgment makes us feel even darker in a hole because we ask ourselves: "What are we doing wrong?"
Ophelie, Haiti (original quote in English, no translation needed)	The school can be a center of orientation for parents, but they must be patient with them. Let the parents engage in their children's school activities. They are afraid of going to the school to speak to the principal. Do you know why? Because they don't speak English well. They do not know how to explain themselves. To engage with parents, they need to be patient. First of all, just because they don't speak English doesn't make them less intelligent. They are aware of what is going on. However, if you could have someone who speaks Creole, we would have fewer complaints. The first thing is to say to the parents: "You are my sister. You are my brother. I'm here to listen to you. I'm here to help you. Even though I cannot answer all of your questions, I can listen to you. I can advise you." If they know there are people who speak Creole, who are able to understand them, and listen to them privately, they would be more involved and engaged.
Guadalupe, Colombia (Español)	A pesar de ser español, el español que hablan en las escuelas aquí no es del todo correcto. El idioma es español, de España, y no lo entiendo. No me queda claro. Las escuelas podrían mejorar si la administración colaborara con más latinos y cómo ellos usan el

	idioma. Posiblemente podamos darles algún consejo sobre este tema y cómo pueden utilizar un español más latinizado. Significa ser más respetuoso y empático.
Angela, Brasil (Português)	Um dia, meu filho voltou para casa chorando muito. Não sei como funcionam as escolas, mas durante o recreio, todas as crianças foram brincar. Aí, a professora disse para o meu filho que ele não tinha permissão para brincar porque ele tinha que fazer aulas de ESOL online. Menina, hoje ele criou um trauma com aulas online e ESOL! Na cabeça dele, ele pensava que ele não poderia brincar com os outros alunos porque ele é brasileiro. Não sei se foi isso que a professora disse, mas talvez a forma como ela disse.
Lucia, Venezuela (original quote in English, no translation needed)	My son is fluent in English, but he attends ESOL classes. The school tested him and found that he has speech delay. He started to have speech therapy, and the therapist spoke English only with him. Nowadays, he does not want to speak Spanish anymore. He is rejecting my language, but my language is the only thing that I can give to him from my culture. He even told me that when he grows up, he will have a big house and one room for a mom who only speaks English. I noticed that I became silent. I felt guilty. I feel like it's my fault because I am not communicating correctly with my child. When a child is exposed to more than one language, their brain develops differently, and they take longer to fully embrace one language because he is trying to understand two different languages at the same time. So, if you compare a child with learning English and Spanish to a child that is only English-speaking. Of course, the only English speaking is going to have more vocabulary or more words that they are required to say. But the bilingual child also has a big vocabulary, just in different languages. But in the U.S., bilingual children are treated like they have speech delays.
Lopez, República Dominicana (Español)	Hace dos semanas, en el colegio de mi hijo, tuvieron una actividad llamada Noche Multicultural. Es una noche en la que algunas familias preparan un plato típico de su país, para que otras puedan probarlo y conocer un poco de la cultura a través de la comida. Creo que tal vez las escuelas podrían tomar esta actividad y desarrollarla más profundamente. No se trata sólo de la comida de ese país, sino también del idioma y de las palabras importantes. Esta semana podría ser español; El mes que viene podría ser mandarín o portugués brasileño. Es decir, cada mes podrían trabajar más plenamente. Podrían armar una actividad más profunda que abarque no solo la comida, sino un poco más de detalle sobre cada país.
Isabel, Venezuela (Español)	Creo que las escuelas podrían alentar a los estudiantes a representar a su país. Que expongan el orgullo de ser venezolanos, colombianos, indios, chinos y brasileños. Creo que eso también ayudaría con esa parte del racismo.

Angela, Brasil (Português)	É importante que as escolas também levante as bandeiras sobre o racismo, as questões de gênero, e migração. Por exemplo, aqui nas escolas, nós temos muitos refugiados. Eles não deveriam ter vergonha de dizer que eles são refugiados. Levantar a bandeira do migrante ou criar um Dia do Orgulho do Migrante seria muito importante!
Ana, Brasil (Português)	Às vezes, as escolas podem prejudicar as crianças que são undocumentadas e que não compartilham sua cultura e de onde elas são, mas como uma forma de proteção. Tem algumas crianças, que não sabem aonde elas nasceram... Esse assunto não existe no *high school*, mas as crianças do *middle school* têm essa conversa sobre migração. Teve um dia, no *middle school*, que minha filha me perguntou se ela tinha os documentos. Aí eu fui e perguntei para ela: "Quais documentos?" Ela disse: "Os documentos para ficar aqui nos Estados Unidos". Minha resposta foi: "Claro que você tem os documentos! Você tem o seu passaporte! Por quê você está perguntando isso?" Ela me perguntou porque as outras meninas da escola falavam sobre crianças undocumentadas na sala de aula. Tipo, se as escolas criarem um evento multicultural, essa outra criança undocumentada pode ser afetada porque ela não conhece o outro lado da história. Ela não tem os documentos! Talvez os pais dessa criança não permitem que ela fale sobre o seu país e sua cultura, mais como uma forma de proteção contra *deportation,* sabe! Assim, eu penso que os eventos multiculturais são problemáticos porque as crianças undocumentadas estão em perigo. Essa criança já sabe que ela não tem os documentos. Eu tenho vários amigos que estão passando por isso, sabe! Estes eventos multiculturais podem provocar *shame* e medo nas crianças undocumentadas.
Anair, Brasil (Português)	Eu gostaria muito de conversar com os professores da minha filha. Seria bom encontrar os professores pessoalmente utilizando o *Google translator*, mas isso não é possível aqui. Eu tenho sorte, porque eu converso sobre tudo com a minha filha. Ela me conta tudo! Por exemplo, alguns alunos quebraram o banheiro da escola durante um *Spring event* e eles postaram um vídeo no TikTok. A escola enviou uma mensagem eletrônica para todos os pais dizendo que estava tudo bem! Em nenhum momento eles vinheram falar com a gente, tipo: "Oi! Como você está? Quero que você saiba que sua filha está segura…" Aqui as escolas não fazem isso. Eles apenas gravaram uma mensagem de voz automática e enviaram para todos os pais. Eles nem se importaram se a mensagem foi compreendida pelos pais que não falavam e não entendem inglês, sabe!
Maria, Venezuela (Español)	No hablo nada de inglés. A veces me gustaría que alguien en la escuela me explicara ciertas cosas. Una vez me comuniqué con la escuela y me dijeron que enviara un correo electrónico. Tardó dos

	meses para recibir una respuesta. A medida que mi hijo se está quedando ciego gradualmente, he estado tratando de inscribirlo en un programa que enseñe braille e inglés. Ocho meses después sigo esperando. Un día lo acosaron en la escuela y le rompieron las lentes. Intenté comunicarme con la maestra para entender qué pasó, pero un mes después todavía no he recibido noticias de su parte. Esta situación del colegio a veces nos puede afectar un poco, sobre todo a nosotras las madres, que vemos a nuestros hijos llorando al llegar del colegio. En lugar de jugar, mi niño inmediatamente se va a la cama sintiéndose triste y deprimido. A él le encantaba jugar a la pelota. La comunicación entre maestros y madres ayudaría, pero no hay comunicación.
Angela, Brasil (Português)	Em matemática, a linha de pensamento que o americano ensina e completamente diferente de como os brasileiros ensinam. Então é muito difícil! Meu filho sempre foi muito bom em matemática e até hoje ele é muito bom. A nota dele começou a ficar com nota baixa, porque ele estava tendo aula online e ele criou traumas de aula online. Teve um dia meu sobrinho e minha sobrinha parou para tentar ensinar ele, mas eles não conseguiram. Meu marido não conseguiu. Nós quatro juntos não conseguimos! Meu filho chorava. Eu mandei uma mensagem para professora e falei: “Professora, a gente está tendo muita dificuldade de ensinar o meu filho por conta disso. Tem sido muito difícil, eu não eu não conheço o método de vocês. Quando a gente vai fazer uma soma, aqui tudo é diferente! Então, eu estou sentindo muita dificuldade! Aí ela me respondeu e me perguntou se eu permitiria que ela ligasse para o meu filho numa sexta-feira após a aula e ela iria dar uma aula particular para ele. Ela ia apagar as notas dele porque estavam muito ruins e ela ia dar aula particular para o meu filho para ele tentar acompanhar a turma. Nossa! Essa professora é um anjo! Ela ligou para ele numa sexta-feira e todo mundo ficou de bituca tentando entender e ela explicou tudo! Ela ficou umas três horas com ele assim, conversando e explicando. Ela explicou a matéria inteira e fez o exercício com ele. E hoje, ele está indo bem em matemática!
Lucia’s poem translation (Spanish to English) Venezuela	I grew up in a country with 3 primary colors, I learned from them in my childhood when I saw them embodied in a flag: yellow, blue and red... One day when I woke up, I realized that beautiful wings came out of me (perhaps they were always there but I had never used them), they began to move to the rhythm of the music that emerged from my soul, it was then when I discovered that I could fly…

When I arrived to my new destination, I felt lost. I did not know how to create my new identity. Then the yellow, blue, and red colors in my wings, from when I was young, started to mix with each other.
Emerging from them, a wider color palette...
Where green, violet, and orange also started to coexist in harmony.

Then I understood that wings have always been more than that.
The colors they wear are chosen by me, without losing my essence, without losing my primary colors, without losing MYSELF, I can add colors.
On my flight I remembered that, more than a country, I am the soul who chooses to undertake this adventure they call living
(by LR)

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

APPROVAL

February 11, 2022

Dear Ms. Michelle Angelo-Rocha:

On 2/9/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY003649
Review Type:	Expedited (7) & (6)
Title:	Translanguaging in the Relationships between Mothers, Children, and School Life
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Approved Protocol and Consent(s)/Assent(s):	• IRB Protocol #1. ; • Verbal Consent in Spanish ; • Verbal Consent, Mothers. English ; Approved study documents can be found under the 'Documents' tab in the main study workspace. Use the stamped consent found under the 'Last Finalized' column under the 'Documents' tab.

Within 30 days of the anniversary date of study approval, confirm your research is ongoing by clicking Confirm Ongoing Research in BullsIRB, or if your research is complete, submit a study closure request in BullsIRB by clicking Create Modification/CR.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent for the virtual verbal consent process as outlined in the federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.117(c).

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Initial Parent Questionnaire

Demographic Information

Beginning of the Interview:

1. Parent Pseudonym
2. Can you introduce yourself?
3. Age
4. In which country were you born?
    a. Mother
    b. Child/children:
5. At what age did you arrive in the U.S.?
    a. Mother:
    b. Child/Children:
6. Did you live in another country (outside of yours) during the process of migrating to the U.S.? Where?
    a. Mother:
    b. Child/Children:
7. If you feel comfortable sharing – How the process of migrating to the U.S. was? Please feel free if you do not want to answer this question.
8. How does this experience impact you and your child/children's experiences?
9. How do you and your child/children feel living in the U.S.?
10. How have your experiences been like as a Latina living in the U.S.? Do your ethnicity, race, and language affect how people, educators, school leaders, and educational organizations treat and/or communicate with you? Explain.

Household Educational and Language

11. What is your highest level of education?
12. What is your current job or occupation?
13. How many languages do you speak? What languages?
14. How well do you and your family speak English?
    a. Mother: Not at all A lit bit Well Very Well
    b. Child/Children: Not at all A lit bit Well Very Well
15. How well do you and your family speak Spanish and/or Portuguese?
    a. Mother: Not at all A lit bit Well Very Well
    b. Child/Children: Mother: Not at all A lit bit Well Very Well
16. How does language influence your life as a mother?
17. How does language influence your daily life raising children in the U.S.?

Information about Your Child/Children

18. How many children do you have?
19. How many children do you have enrolled in K-12 public schools in the U.S.?

Name	Grade Level	Age	Nationality	Fluency in English in Spanish? (Reading, writing, listening, and speak)	Fluency in English? (Reading, writing, listening, and speak)

20. What language does your child feel more comfortable speaking?
21. What language is spoken at home?
22. How do your child/children feel about their family cultural background?
23. Do you think U.S. culture influences your child/children's behaviors, self-esteem, and sense of belonging? Could you explain?
24. Have schools influenced their feelings and behaviors?

Information about Student, School, and Mothers Relationship

25. Please describe your involvement in your child's education.
26. When your child/children have/have homework in English. Who helps him/her most of the time?
27. When your child/children are/are struggling in their school assignments, do you feel comfortable helping your child?
    a. If not, please share what you feel when you struggle to help your child/children.
28. Do you have support in your child/children's school? Explain
29. How is language becoming a barrier between you and your child?
30. Is language becoming a barrier between you, teachers, and school leaders?
31. Is English fluency a barrier when your child needs to take a mandatory/standardized exam in English (school test and state test)?
32. How does your child feel before and after the test in English?
33. Does your child's school provide support and services to your child? If no, explain.
34. Does the school provide all the services and support immigrant parents need to help their children succeed? Please explain.
35. What do you think needs to change in U.S. public schools to make things better for immigrant and multilingual students and families?

Mothers Experiences

36. How do you feel about your role as a mother?
37. How do you feel about your role as a mother raising multilingual children in the U.S.?
38. How does your role as an immigrant mother reflect your identity?
39. How your experiences as an immigrant are impacting you as a mother?
40. Has it been challenging navigating this educational system? Why?
41. How do teachers and school leaders treat you?
42. Do you feel yourself heard in your child's school?
43. Do you feel that your opinion as a mother matters in your child's school? Could you give me some examples?

   a. If not, how should schools improve their services to support immigrant parents?

44. Do teachers and school leaders need to include more aspects of your culture in school practices (curriculum and programs) so your child and you can feel welcomed and connected? Please, could you provide few examples?
45. Do schools give you enough space and freedom to advocate for your child despite language barriers, ethnicity, and immigration status?
46. Please share some of the barriers that make you fear not being able to connect and help your children?
47. When you have concerns or questions about the school or classroom – whom do you go to for help?
48. Do schools notice your efforts?
    a. If not, could you give me some examples?

Language, Immigration Status & Schools (If mothers feel comfortable sharing)

49. Does your language and immigration status impact your relationship with school leaders and teachers?
50. Does your child's language and immigration status influence how your child is treated in school?
51. How do schools use language to engage parents whose first language is not English? Could you give us a few examples?

Questions Focused on Race, Ethnicity & Racism

52. Have you and your child/children been victims of racism at school because of your language? Please, could you provide some examples?
53. What did you feel when this event happened?
54. Any teacher, administrator, or peer witnessed it? What did they do?
55. Do your ethnicity, language, gender, and immigration status influence how teachers, school leaders, and other parents treat you? And your child/children?
    a. Did you feel comfortable sharing with school leaders and your child's teacher? If not, could you explain?
56. Are teachers and educational leaders prepared to help immigrant children and families who are victims of racism?

Mothers' Hopes & Aspirations

57. What are your aspirations for immigrant children attending schools in Florida?
58. What are your aspirations for immigrant mothers trying to help their children to feel accepted in schools?
59. What activities should schools implement to help immigrant emergent multilingual students and families?
60. If you could have a school leader, a teacher, and a policymaker here listening to you: What do you wish to tell them? How can they help immigrant mothers navigate their children's schools?
61. Is there anything you would like to share about your experience as a mother trying to learn a new language while trying to help your child/children thrive?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Angelo-Rocha is an Afro-Indigenous descent Brazilian scholar and a first-generation college student. She earned a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication with a specialization in Journalism from the *Universidade Católica de Brasília (UCB)*. While in Brazil, she worked as a TV producer for the Brazilian governmental television and as a cultural producer in a museum of contemporary arts, where she managed cultural grants, organized national and international arts exhibitions, and facilitated educational events for K-12 public schools and educators.

After migrating to the U.S. in her middle 20s with limited proficiency in English, Michelle dedicated years to English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes in adult education before gaining admission into the Latin America, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies (ISLAC) master's program at the University of South Florida (USF). Her research focused on human rights and sociology, and she conducted ethnographic research on the experiences of immigrant victims of human trafficking in Florida. Michelle also conducted several studies on racial and gender inequality and violence in Brazil and Argentina. During this period, she concluded an internship on human rights in Buenos Aires, Argentina, working closely with the *Madres de La Plaza de Mayo* to extend research on the social injustice crimes committed during the military dictatorship in Latin America.

In Florida, Michelle gained experience working with emergent multilingual students in K-12 public schools and volunteered to mentor adult refugees learn English and understand their rights in the U.S. Currently, her research agenda focuses on social justice issues in the U.S. and Latin America, with a particular emphasis on Latinx and Caribbean emergent multilingual immigrant children and families living in the U.S. She is interested in the effects of English-Only and anti-immigration policies on immigrant children and families from low-socioeconomic background, and the impact of those policies and practices on parental engagement and families' mental health.

Michelle has collaborated with several human rights organizations and task forces in the U.S. and Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous activist communities in Brazil. She was also the co-editor of the book *Making a Spectacle: Examining Curriculum/Pedagogy as Recovery From Political Trauma* (2020) and has published multilingual peer-reviewed book chapters and articles in recognized journals. In 2022, Michelle received the USF Golden Bull Award, the highest honors award in leadership, research, and community service engagement.

Michelle has spent the last four years dedicated to Cyber Florida, where she initially served as an academic planner and currently works as a research analyst. Her primary goal is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the STEM field, with a particular focus on cybersecurity. She strives to provide support to women, people of color, professionals with dis/abilities, transitioning veterans, and first responders, helping them to transition and secure roles in STEM professions and improve their quality of life through comprehensive workforce development initiatives. Furthermore, Michelle is committed to aiding Cyber Florida in bringing cyber literacy to the worforce and K-12 public schools, especially for emergent multilingual immigrant children, parents, and communities. Lastly, Michelle is passionate about creating digital educational content such as podcasts and has created a bilingual YouTube project titled "Our Stories – *Nossas Histórias*" about Education, Research & Social Justice, which aligns with her passion for journalism, research, and community-based activism.