THINK OF THE WORLD WE CARRY WITH US: LATINA WOMEN CHANGING THE CONVERSATION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

JUAN JOSE GARCIA
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

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ABSTRACT:

My genuine interest in the role of parents in schools, especially of those parents who face more difficult challenges when making their voices heard is sustained through the memory of my parents' participation throughout my schooling. My parent's participation in my education went further than the formal parent involvement model offered by my school. A parent's conception of their child's education is largely based on their relationship with the school and the educational intent for the child. Parent involvement is claimed to be a multidimensional construct, and we now know that generally there are two places where a parent becomes involved in their child's education—the school and the home. My parents were part of communal participation where parents communicated about school and organized as a community to be involved when needed. They communicated with other parents (our neighbors) who attended meetings or events to keep abreast of important information.

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My genuine interest in the role of parents in schools, especially of those parents who face more difficult challenges when making their voices heard is sustained through the memory of my parents' participation throughout my schooling. My parent's participation in my education went further than the formal parent involvement model offered by my school. A parent's conception of their child's education is largely based on their relationship with the school and the educational intent for the child. Parent involvement is claimed to be a multidimensional construct, and we now know that generally there are two places where a parent becomes involved in their child's education—the school and the home. My parents were part of communal participation where parents communicated about school and organized as a community to be involved when needed. They communicated with other parents (our neighbors) who attended meetings or events to keep abreast of important information.

My parents were involved in my schooling. Although I am sure they knew very little about the formal definition of "parental involvement" in schools, they did as much as they could in their way. My experience has made me reflect that schools should not be isolated in their search for solutions but instead work for and accept the collaboration of the parents in their schools. The views toward my education that my parents expressed represented one form of parental involvement, or what I call parent participation: one that encouraged me to work hard at school so that I could move further in my studies and my future endeavors. Ideally, the school should not be a place where teachers come to teach and students come to learn, and that's it. In the best of both worlds, schools should be an extension of the community. They should be places where parents, grandparents, and community volunteers are seen every day. They should be places where students feel a sense of belonging and contribution. It stands to reason that the more "community-like" a school is, the more interesting and successful parent participation will be. I became involved in the school participation of a group of Latina women at West Lake Junior High (**WLJH**) in West Valley City (WVC), Utah, a predominantly Latinx community. It was through an invitation from a colleague to help with the newly built community garden that I began to volunteer and was later employed by the school to assist with the Family Center. During the first couple of months of volunteering in the garden, I noticed how the participation of the Latina women entailed making connections and having conversations in the garden about their children and plans for the upcoming school year. The principal's vision for the garden was to create a place where parents, teachers, and students could potentially form a partnership centered on improving and strengthening parent and school relations. The garden was built on the school's north side field, making it visible and open to the neighboring community. Over time, the garden became a unique place outside the concrete walls of the school for what I saw as parent participation.

WHY A GARDEN

Part of the reasoning for the principal having the garden built on school grounds was two-fold-one was to have a different way for teachers to teach a science lesson or a mathematical equation and also to teach about the environmental impact of a garden in a suburban space, the

second was to have parents involved in teaching students about gardens from the knowledge that some parents might already have to complement the teacher's curriculum. The women that form part of this group were in a familiar context since many of them grew up with home gardens where their parents and grandparents had taught them how to tend them. The principal felt that they could share this knowledge to be able to give a different perspective to the teaching and learning process.

The fact that since he had given the keys to the garden to Yesenia who was also the parent liaison for the school meant that the garden would be available to the community at times and days when parents had time to come with their families, so this allowed for parents to develop trusting relationships with one another. And since there was a group of women who had been at the school for several years helping out at the family center they had already developed a relationship with the school's principal, they did not have to follow the school's agenda when it came to bringing up issues at the school. The parents who could not come in during school hours began to feel like they could come to the garden and voice their concerns with the knowledge that they would be heard by the school. The garden provided a place and the opportunity for parents to help each other and figure out what the school is doing to address their concerns. They were able to build a collective sense of authority, which countered the power imbalance that the school system has in place.

The purpose of this research was to explore Latina women's perception of their engagement in said education. Based on the literature, parent and community involvement is a process that encourages support and provides opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to work together to improve student learning. It demonstrates that everyone involved can benefit from parent/school relationships in some shape or form. Parents are well informed about school activities and can maintain an ongoing discussion with their children's teachers, ultimately improving student learning. For this group of Latina women, the garden became a place for a much more meaningful engagement with the school. The actions the Latina women took at the community garden challenge the scripted ways parent involvement had been established by Eurocentric schooling. As mentioned, the mothers acknowledge that parent involvement meant being present inside the school walls, but that not everyone was able to be present during the designated times.

When I first started going to the garden my thoughts were not of establishing a site to work on an ethnography. I enjoyed going with my partner and watching our daughter play in the garden. The planting, weeding, watering, and picking the crops along with the conviviality with the parents seemed familiar to me. It reminded me of the summers I spent at my grandparent's ranch. Waking up at sunrise with my grandfather and headed out to the Huerta (orchard) to water the orange tree orchards from the canals that he and his sons-my uncles-had built. Then I went back to the ranch and helped my grandmother tend to her home garden. I remember weeding and picking the different vegetables she had planted, all the different smells from the flowers and plants that she used to decorate the house or that she used for home remedies. Spending time in the garden brought back those memories. There was something about the way the moms talked with each other about their days. The way they joked about their husbands, kids, and neighbors. Laughing at the little

things that they warned them not to do or say. How they listened to each other when they had a concern or an issue that they needed some advice with. And these conversations were not limited to only school issues but they also expressed concerns about their family or finances. Listening to them reminded me of my grandmother, mother, and aunts talking to each other or their neighbors and sharing their insight and knowledge of how to deal with or resolve their issues. Any approach to involve parents in ways that will transform the culture of schools must require a radical rearrangement of power relations between schools and parents. A transformative parental participation strategy must be rooted in the needs and experiences of families, communities, and schools. Many studies of parent involvement problematically focus on what happens within the confines of the school walls and fail to understand that many of the decisions about a child's education happen outside those walls. As a researcher, I began to understand how school administrators, teachers, and staff have certain assumptions concerning parental involvement. It was the world of the parents that interested me most.

At the garden at West Lake, the parents spoke about how they felt unwelcome at the school because the staff made them feel a nuisance when they came to the school to resolve an issue regarding their child. As time passed parents began to realize that when they brought up any given issues affecting their children it became known that certain parents had a direct connection with the school principal. They felt heard and their issues were approached and respected. I became interested in the interconnectedness that the parents demonstrated within and outside of the garden when it came to decision-making and prioritizing. I began to see how their everyday participation could change the perception of marginalized parents within this specific school.

A Decolonial Feminist Approach to Participation

Drawing from modernity and coloniality scholars, I engage Argentinian feminist philosopher, Maria Lugones' (2010) "Towards a Decolonial Feminism" to help me approach, learn, and understand the participation of the women I talked to at West Lake Junior High (WLJH. My engagement with Decolonial Feminist thought helps me with three concerns in this research. First, to unveil the deficit portraits of the women in this ethnography however they were defined in the school context. Second, help me understand how racialized and gendered binaries have put these particular women under a classification that limits their authority to domestic matters and does not authorize them to be an independent base of leadership in the school. Third and final, to help me understand how the unique character of the garden exposed a de-linking of decision making and advocacy from colonial impositions to a degree.

On several occasions, while at the garden I overheard some of the women talk about how they had difficulties in trying to communicate with their child's teacher. Every time they attempted to see the teacher they were told they needed to come in during the teacher's office hours, which were usually in conflict with their work hours. They spoke about how the "immigrant parent" felt like they were invisible and that only when they volunteered for something, did they get noticed but even then, they were still not listened to. But they continued to find ways to change the conversation to make sure that their children's education was never disrupted.

Decolonial thought is about making the invisible visible and about analyzing the mechanisms that were set up that made invisibility possible and part of this change is to recognize the intellectual production of what was once invisible by no longer reducing it to only culture or ideology. Mignolo (2007) has repeatedly insisted that what is sought out in decolonial thought is not only a change in the contents of conversation but also a change of the limits and conditions of conversation. In other words, we do not just need new ideas but we need a completely new way of thinking. Decolonial thought aims to recognize situatedness as involved in the production of knowledge. This was demonstrated by the women in the garden when they became part of the teaching team. They brought a more holistic model that was centered on their knowledge about gardening that was meant to be complementary to formal education and the teaching of the educational standards.

The theoretical considerations produced by feminists of color such as Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldua seek to destabilize hegemonic conceptualizations of humanity defined in opposition to "third world" subjects. From this perspective, their voices have served as a bridge through which the main concerns of women from the Global South can be heard in the Global North. For this research, I engage decolonial feminism specifically through Argentinian anthropologist María Lugones' "Towards a Decolonial Feminism" (2010). I sought to apply a decolonial feminist perspective to parental involvement to reinterpret the "scripted" model of assessing what constitutes an involved parent and how this model serves as an imposition on the women represented in this study. Decolonial feminism as articulated by Lugones engages Anibal Quijano's (2001) concept of the "coloniality of power" which can be understood as the confluence of the production of race and gender/categories, labor, capitalist economy, and Eurocentric epistemology. Colonial scripts de-authorize the women I studied both by defining them racially, as knowing less and coming from more primitive groups, and by limiting their authority to the private realm of their homes. The garden offered an extension of the women's voices: it is a "public" space, where the women talked both about their aims for their children and how these aims might be translated into school policy. It allowed them the space and community needed to counter the racial denigration of the colonial script and the gender delimitation of their authority.

Decolonial feminist theory engages with debates about coloniality/modernity and indigenous identity and gender in Latin America providing space for the silenced voices of women to speak of their identities, who they are, and the relationship between their personal and organizational lives (Lugones 2010). Lugones (2007; 2008) argued that modernity/coloniality needed to be understood through specific articulations of race, gender, and sexuality, which requires scholars to engage in dialogue with women in the Global South who have different values, ideas, and experiences and to challenge the liberal, White feminist paradigm that continues to dominate the discipline (Metcalfe and Woodhams 2012).

In her essay "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," Lugones (2007) introduced a systemic understanding of gender constituted by colonial/modernity in terms of multiple relations of power. This gender system has a light and a dark side that depict relations,

and beings in relation as deeply different and thus as calling for very different patterns of violent abuse. Lugones argues that gender itself is a colonial introduction, a violent introduction consistently and contemporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies, and communities as the building ground of the "civilized" West.

Traditional academic structures and cultures typically include practices, patterns, rules, values, knowledge, and interpersonal styles that reflect and ensure the well-being and cultural capital of those at the center of society who most benefit from the colonial agenda. The way most US academic institutions do business has been passed down within their Eurocentric origins and history, privileging coloniality. The traditional view of parent involvement assumes a European-based nuclear family where the father and the mother play a role/script. For the woman, the emphasis is more of a service role of a stay-at-home mom.

Lugones' writings are an analysis of the colonial system for controlling women and through women, the families. Lugones uses the modern/colonial gender system or the coloniality of gender as a lens that permits her to search for social organizations from which people have resisted capitalist modernity due to their tension with its logic (2007, 742). She proposed to work towards decolonial feminism by learning about each other as resisters to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference without necessarily being an insider (I am situated as a male researcher) to the worlds of meaning from which resistance to coloniality arises. A closely related idea here is not simply to see a single alternative but many within the understanding that with oppression there is always resistance at many levels. It is from this perspective that I approach and move towards what I consider to be a decolonial feminist starting point in the conversation of parent involvement. I refer to it as decolonial because part of the goal is to denounce and transform colonial relations of power and colonial ways of relating that continue to persist within the educational system when it comes to parent participation.

I choose Decolonial Feminist Theory to fully examine the complexity of power within the discourse around parent engagement and to recognize the empowerment of those who have traditionally been marginalized through the historical practice of silencing and segregation. The epistemological foundation of this paradigm is that meaning and knowledge are constructed through a historical and social context in which race and complex structures of power interplay within society. "This means that not only is the relationship between the knower and the would-be known (i.e., the researcher and participants) interactive, it also involves a consciousness of cultural complexities in that relationship" (Mertens 2010, 32). Decolonial feminist epistemological framework challenges the use of dominant paradigms and methodological approaches in research. Specifically, it objects to how these approaches have been used to examine and inappropriately characterize the experiences of Latinas/os. It calls on critical researchers to center the lived experiences of communities within research in a deliberate attempt to create social change (Hurtado 2003). Additionally, it recognizes the fundamental value of the lived experiences of communities not just within the content of knowledge produced but in the very process of creating that knowledge. Utilizing this framework is particularly important for this study because it provides the tools to help capture the experiences of the Latina mothers, and because of my

positionality as a male researcher that powerfully informs my subjectivity as I entered into this study.

I argue that cultural intuition (Delgado-Bernal 1998) mediated my broader methodological approach to this study helping me tap into the lives of the women. Specifically, my experience as a witness to my own parents' struggles in the schools I attended informed my perspective, albeit as a son not as a parent, or even as an immigrant, experiencing these forms of abuse and marginalization. But even from this stance, my personal experiences continued to serve as a source of cultural intuition that allowed me to identify those cultural practices and norms instilled by my parents that fundamentally regulated how I developed relationships with the moms. It focused on a collective memory I shared with the women, not so much in terms of the content of our experiences but the shared cultural ways we learned about relating to one another and the world around us. A decolonial feminist approach to ethnography encourages dialogue between the researcher and the participant, where power is shared and knowledge is produced together. This raises issues of representation and positionality: the researcher's power concerning knowledge production and the representations of participants and their knowledge. It highlights the position of researchers in enabling collaborative dialogue and equal power relations with participants. In addressing the complexities of representation and positionality, a decolonial feminist theory, therefore, enables me to "respect the perspective of 'the Other' and invite 'the Other' to speak." (Kincheloe et al. 2015, 171).

A decolonial feminist approach to research offers a means to decolonize ethnography; it is a collaborative approach to building new knowledge that is socially, culturally, and historically located. Implementing this approach in my research I found that the women organizing is orientated by the women's respect for each other and to reclaim the value of community, where they are at one with the community of the home and the community of the school under the conditions of equality and cooperation. In this study, I was particularly interested in examining how the community garden and by extension the family center, shaped and informed the participants of the women to collectively organize to reshape the conversation of parent involvement. The community garden brought together six women who shared the difficult task of building a place for themselves and their children far away from the communities where they grew up. The community garden provided the context for this personal transformation, enabling new forms of action at the school. The importance of a place "where I can be myself" should not be underestimated. Too often, their children's school was a place where the mothers could not be themselves, where they felt stifled, silenced, manipulated, or voiceless. In the garden, they felt like they could recover their wholeness and exercise and develop those parts of themselves that were not given expression at the school. As I write this, I have an image of the mothers, laughing at the garden while they tended to the crops. They are talking about issues and questions that they had about the school and how their concerns could be brought up to administrators, but at the same time laughing at each other's jokes and family happenings, their faces radiant with confidence.

As I have mentioned before, the garden belonged to the parents and in this space, they began to expand their conversations from what were they going to be planting to one of how can we bring

the issues that parents were discussing into the school. One of the things that Yesi had started doing at the garden was having informal parent meetings. She realized that not all parents could come during school hours to a meeting at the family center so she started having a monthly gathering at the garden on Sunday afternoon or evening hours during the week when she was tending to the garden. She would make sure to call parents and send notes home inviting them to come and work on the garden and have conversations about concerns and events that were coming up at the school. She tried to have the notes be translated to the different languages parents spoke within the community. She wanted to make sure that as many parents as possible could be reached. She had also made sure to let the administration, teachers, and counselors know that they were invited to come. During the winter months, she still had the informal meetings, but they were moved to the family center and tried to keep them on Sundays or if during the week, in the evenings when parents would be able to attend. Yesi informed me that the principal and one of the assistant principals showed up twice to the garden. From the times I was able to attend I never saw a teacher and Yesi mentioned that none had shown up.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATIONS (THE MOMS)

Through this research, I examined Latina mothers' experiences and perceptions of being involved in their children's education. The mother's responses to interview questions, my observations at the garden, family center, and school events were synthesized to tell the narrative of Latina mother's participation. The examples the mother's provided about how they help their children illustrated how they view their engagement. In the context of this study, this premise suggests that there were a myriad of ways to be engaged in a child's education and that the traditional Eurocentric notions of how a parent should be involved present a limited view of family participation. The Latina mothers' narratives will illustrate the scope of parent participation by the moms and their community. This analysis centers on the voice of Latina mothers and allows for a focus on the centrality of experience and knowledge of the moms. The data and analysis provide a counternarrative and disruption of the master-narrative, which traditionally presents a deficit account of immigrant parents of color.

Several of the moms described situations where they came into the school or tried to contact school personnel, but none of the participants shared a story about an educator reaching out to initiate contact unless it was for disciplinary problems. This engagement, as they described it, was a one-sided relationship where they were expected to come in, make contact, and resolve an issue for their child. This form of engagement represents a traditional framework (the script) of parental involvement. When the moms did attempt to involve themselves and help their children or access the school, they struggled to understand communication due to language barriers or because of a scheduling conflict. As **Z** described, the only communication about her sons' progress came at report card time: "I know my son does good in school but sometimes I would like to get a note from his teachers letting me know how he is doing before I get the report." Parents were expected to support their children at home with homework and keep up with their progress, but communication between the school and parents was limited even if letters sent home were in both English and Spanish. A report card mailed home was **Z's** only report on the progress of her child's

studies. She knows the value of parent support when it comes to children's education, but acknowledged the challenges she and other parents face to get access to information. **V** spoke about knowing, as did **Z**, that parents should be involved, but that an unfamiliar system in a predominantly English-speaking environment created an uncomfortableness to communicate well with educators:

> **V**: In Mexico, parents are involved in their children's education but to a certain point. Why? Because there we knew that teachers are educating our children. We want them [teachers at WLJHS] to do the same. But the system here really is very different. Schools here want us to be involved, but we don't know or simply we don't feel comfortable. Because when you get there, they only want us to be their assistant—you know, pass out papers or take children to the restroom. And I don't feel comfortable because I want to know what my child is learning.

These responses speak to how dominant ideologies maintain barriers of access that are not seen or recognized by many at the school but are highly visible to those who are marginalized. This environment perpetuates a system that privileges those in the majority and reifies the marginalization of the minority community. **V** and **Z** are both pointing out that being in the minority and seeing no one of your community in the school can make it an intimidating place to access, and she is explicit that she is not comfortable accessing the school in this environment. Some of the parents indicated that communication is only initiated when there is a serious problem with their child. **A.** described how the school did not contact her until a situation, which started as a small problem, turned into a bigger issue even after she made several attempts to engage with the school about the issue:

> Because a girl was bothering my daughter, I went to the school several times to talk about that. And when she decided to protect herself, they called me. Because she said, "These girls are always making fun of me and pushing me and I am fed up." "The assistant principal told me your daughter pushed this girl," and we had a problem . . . And I said, "I feel bad that this happened, but it was supposed to be over from the last time I came to the school. How does this work? You only phoned me when she is the one that starts the trouble but when she is the one that is being bullied you don't?"

A. went to the school twice to deal with an issue around bullying for her daughter, but was unsuccessful. It was not until her daughter decided to protect herself and pushed the girl back that the school contacted her. The response by the school was so delayed, even with **A**'s attempts to intervene, that it escalated to a physical altercation between her daughter and another student.

Y spoke directly to another participant about the importance of communication, and how if she had known about her son's troubles, she could have done something to intervene and help the situation, "It is very important communication because if I knew about [my son] from the beginning we could have done something. But we have to keep on communicating because it is the only way we can help our children." **Y** recognized that communication between the school and parents is critical to supporting students and intervening. She also indicated that if the

communication comes too late, the effectiveness of an intervention is diminished. **M** also shared that she wished she had known of avenues for effective communication:

> [My daughter] is a very good girl but as you say there is a lack of communication. I would have liked to know there was a place I could talk with people in my situation. The marks are good, but I wanted to know about you earlier.

M referred to her daughter as a good, well-behaved student but also recognizes a lack of communication on the part of the school and wishes she had known about the family center and community garden earlier so she could have gone in to "talk with people who understand my situation." **M** is not concerned about her daughter's marks or grades because as she described they are "good," but she does feel the need to have a place to discuss educational issues.

In this way, communication becomes a privilege to those who know the system and can intervene on behalf of their children. Access is maintained for English-speaking parents and educators in the system and assumes this one-sided communication is enough to support all communities of students and parents. The system's failure to address or recognize the current communication (or lack of) only further exacerbates the inequities in access and opportunity for these students and families. The mothers' primary motivation for parental participation was their desire for their children to have a future that is better than their own. For all six of the moms, the *future* meant that their kids would continue their education and/or they would have a fulfilling career. The moms saw a correlation between their present-day struggles with language and money and their educational experiences. Consequently, they wanted their children to see the relationship between working hard in school and having an easier life in the future. Many of the mothers equated the type of job their children will have with their commitment to education. They wanted their children's future jobs to fulfill and provide higher monetary opportunities so that their children are not limited like they are. **A** and her husband use their experience with work to motivate their son and daughter to focus on their education. She told me about having the following conversation with both of them:

> "Do your school work, that way you don't have to work too hard when you are big. You don't want to be like your father and me. We are there, every day, we are there working, it does not matter if it's raining, too sunny, too cold, too hot. You don't want to work like that." I tell them, "That's why you have to study." His father tells him the same, "You have to study so you don't have to work like me."

By being engaged in their education, she hoped that her children will succeed in school and be able to work in a professional field. Similarly, **V** felt that if she would have had the opportunity to complete high school she would be better able to assist her sons. She expressed frustration that because she did not finish school, she is not equipped to help her sons without others' help. She wanted her son to be well educated so that they did not struggle as she has. This goal for their future has motivated her to be engaged in their education. **Z** worried about the future for her son because he struggled to focus in school. She started asking herself frequently, "What will happen in the future for my kids?" She worried that if she was not involved in his education now, there

would be negative consequences for him in the future. She wanted her son to be motivated by his future as well, so she reminded him to listen to his teacher and hoped that he would see the connection between doing well in school and being successful in life. All of the moms discussed college as part of their children's future. **Y** already had one daughter in college and felt that a college degree was crucial for her children to have a solid future. She told me:

> All the time I talk to them about that because if you are studying, you can make something of yourself, something good in life. I did not get the opportunity to go to college, look at me. I cannot work in a better paying job, but if they go to college they might be better off. If you don't study, life, it's harder than if you have a profession or you are a professional.

V, like **Y,** talked about always talking to her sons about going to college. She mentioned that she had not been successful in convincing her oldest son to go to college; he had decided to work in construction like his father. But as her second son was getting ready to graduate high school she sat him down and told him:

> My son thinks of the world we carry with us. It is not only what you pick up in that specific moment but it's also what your parents, grandparents, and many generations back have taught you and how those lessons are part of the road you still have to walk. That is why going to college is something you should do so that you can get much further than we did.

All of the moms mentioned that their struggles motivated them to help their children pursue a college degree. Although the mothers recognized their limitations in their ability to educate their children, they were not deterred. They felt inadequate and yet capable. The mothers used their present-day struggles to motivate themselves to positively impact their children's future. Access to the system is difficult due to the barriers reinforced by the system. These barriers maintain a status quo environment that privileges English as a language of access which frees up time and resources to access the school, and citizenship which gives parents more knowledge and safety to access the system and question outcomes for their students. A common theme throughout these statements is that they are interested, invested, and desire to be involved in their children's education, but how can they participate when there are no spaces or opportunities made available to do so? Instead, they encounter a system that prevents access, is limited in communication, and sets up rules for communication that exclude an entire population of parents who have to provide for their family.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore Latina women's perceptions of their participation in their children's education because of the community garden and to understand their experiences. This dissertation contributes to a deepening of the discourse in research and practice at the intersection of parent participation, school-family partnerships, and shared leadership. Gordon and Louis (2009) reported a recent convergence of calls for shared leadership, participatory reforms, and schools as communities. Likewise, the literature on school—family

partnerships need to acknowledge goals beyond those of raising student achievement as legitimate aims for engaging families and so incorporate lessons on shared leadership and leadership for social justice. The study seeks to understand how parents, as stakeholders of their children's education, had developed a partnership with the principal that gives parents a meaningful voice and a presence in the educational setting and how they wanted to create structural change in the school culture.

This demands a major shift in mindset, from one of devaluing and doing to and for families to one of valuing and co-creating with them: asking questions, listening, empowering, sharing perspectives and information, partnering, codesigning, implementing, and assessing new approaches and solutions, and supporting parent leadership and advocacy for educational equity and change. It means building on family strengths and working with families to co-create and dive deeper into their beliefs, norms, and practices. It means setting policies for schools and other organizations that combat racial and economic inequalities and creating opportunities for teachers to hone their understanding of how inequality manifests itself in children's and families' lives. When relationships with educators are characterized by mutual respect, trust, open communication, and inclusion in decision-making, families are more likely to feel confident about their roles as advocates and become more engaged in their children's learning. Yet these relationships do not happen overnight, nor do they exist in a vacuum. They are fundamentally shaped by and built upon a community's culture-its beliefs, goals, social norms, practices, everyday routines, languages, and economic resources. Considering the findings presented in this research, schools should promote and support parental involvement programs in ways that are meaningful and important to the families of minority school children. Schools should consider how they can devise and invest in activities and strategies that foster parent and school collaboration and enhance collaboration and partnership between the parent, home, child, and school. Additionally, in opposition to deficit-based theory and research, I hope that the results of this research will challenge current orthodoxies, the status quo and the acceptance of what "others" deem to be considered true parental involvement or to view that white experiences should be considered the normative standard. Current models and paradigms of parent involvement require a shift to be looser, broader, and less general, to encompass and include minority parent involvement. Their less visible, unscripted, and unconventional contributions of involvement must be recognized and acknowledged. And those who create paradigms for parent involvement programs need to be more culturally aware, open-minded, and educated about the many ways minority parents are supporting their children, "beyond bake sales."

With regards to implications, I offer this caveat; minority parents (including myself) are deeply concerned about their children's schooling, best interest, and well-being. As the women in this study shared, the various ways in which they are involved demonstrate an obvious need to rethink, reconceptualize, and redefine parent involvement in schooling. And while many White teachers, administrators, and district staff may have "good intentions," it takes more than just good intentions or even an "openness" to seriously consider and tackle issues surrounding race with regards to the education and schooling of children of color. Schools should start working towards

building trust with stakeholders inside of a child's home. Teachers should challenge their thinking and their own biases. And the school administration should insist and provide coaching so that staff begins to mitigate cultural incompetence and close communication gaps and hold them accountable for deliberate attempts to sabotage the future of even one student or the break-down of communication with even one family. Schools should consider the social and personal experiences as well as literacy and educational levels and preferred communication methods of all families.

CONTRIBUTOR:

Juan Jose Garcia Maldonado, earned PhD from Education, Culture & Society Department at the University of Utah. Faculty at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

CONTACT:

Juan Jose Garcia Maldonado, jgarcia3244@alamo.edu; folklorejay@gmail.edu

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