Beyond "Engaged/Involved": Latina Immigrant Mothers' Negotiations of Family-Bilingual Program Relations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
Based on expectations and behaviors associated with White, middle-, and upper-class families, U.S. educational institutions continue to frame racially minoritized families as inferior beings and as the causes for their children's educational challenges. Latinx families can be positioned in deficit ways even in dual language bilingual education programs (DLBE), often lauded for being culturally and linguistically expansive settings. Informed by Critical Race Theory in Education and LatCrit, this study presents counter-stories of two Latina immigrant mothers supporting their children's learning and development during the COVID-19 pandemic in states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant legislative histories, Arizona and Massachusetts. Although the mothers were positioned as "engaged/involved" parents by the DLBE programs, their forms of care and support went beyond school-led behaviors associated with such labels. Leveraging community cultural wealth, the mothers shared a deep commitment to sustaining their children's bilingual and bicultural development and wellness. At the same time, they problematized static and constrained forms of engagement efforts during pandemic schooling and learning. As such, their counter-stories trouble deficit conceptualizations and false dichotomies within family-bilingual school relations and serve as a cautionary tale for educational programs framed as supportive of linguistic and cultural pluralism. We argue for the continued interrogation and reconfiguration of school-led forms of engagement to ensure that racially minoritized families engage in shared leadership and school governance and have their knowledge forms and language traditions elevated as crucial levers for catalyzing transformative learning in response to COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts.

Keywords: family engagement, COVID-19 pandemic, Latino/Latina/Latinx, mothers, families, dual language, bilingual

Introduction
Based on predetermined expectations and behaviors associated with White middle- and upper-class families, U.S. educational institutions continue to frame racially minoritized families as inferior beings and as the causes of their children's educational hardships (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Love et al.,

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2021). Latinx families may be positioned in deficit ways even in dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs, which are often lauded as culturally and linguistically expansive educational settings (Valdés, 1997, 2018). In fact, the experiences of Latinx families in DLBE programs are often essentialized and presented as a basis for comparison with those of White middle- and upper-class families (Chaparro, 2020). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic led Latina mothers to redefine their caretaking roles in their children's education and flexibly respond to educational and social policies (Bruhn, 2023; Delgado, 2022). For instance, many of them assumed the role of teaching bilingually—in English and Spanish—through virtual platforms while protecting their children from contracting the COVID-19 virus within cramped living arrangements (Bruhn, 2023). Additionally, Latina mothers often shifted their educational aspirations for their children by prioritizing the children's physical safety and participating in local advocacy organizations to refute unclear, arduous school guidelines (Bruhn, 2023; Delgado, 2022). However, much of the reporting on these mothers has focused on single geographic locations and general education settings, only minimally reporting how these mothers supported learning and well-being across multiple modalities. Hence, the varied and sophisticated ways in which Latina immigrant mothers navigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on DLBE must be understood, as these experiences help mitigate deficit, essentialized orientations toward Latinx families, and inform mobilization efforts to reimagine schooling and learning in the aftermath of the pandemic.

To augment reports on the nature, priorities, and negotiations of Latina immigrant care work during DLBE pandemic schooling, we generated counter-stories from two multi-year ethnographic studies that focused on the experiences of families in DLBE programs occurring in two states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant legislative histories: Arizona and Massachusetts. The counter-stories are grounded in the experiences of two Latina immigrant mothers, Lupe and Paloma (both pseudonyms), who represent critical cases due to their unique positioning as "engaged/involved" by DLBE staff members and programming. Specifically, we engaged in counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to answer the following two research questions: 1) How do two Latina immigrant mothers' counter-stories of DLBE family engagement contest dominant orientations toward Latinx family engagement in schools? 2) How do two Latina immigrant mothers rely on their community's cultural wealth to support the learning and well-being of their children in DLBE during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Leveraging various capitals of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), Paloma's and Lupe's counter-stories reveal a shared, deep commitment to sustaining their children's language and heritage practices, biliteracy teaching and learning, and socioemotional and physical wellness as they negotiated multiple constraints induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, these counter-stories challenge the deficit conceptualizations and false dichotomies within family-bilingual school relationships. Overall, we argue for the continued interrogation of superficial positionings related to school-led forms of engagement that aim to absolve schools from ensuring that Latina immigrant mothers engage in shared leadership and school governance, acquire various resources and opportunities, and leverage their knowledge forms and language traditions. Such commitments would help establish Latina mothers as critical catalysts of transformative learning and communal care within COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts.

Review of the Literature

Dominant Approaches to Family Engagement in U.S. Schools

Educational institutions and their actors expect parents to conform to static and prescribed roles, behaviors, and knowledge traditions. Such normalized forms of conduct and relations include

attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school, participating in parent-teacher associations, and serving as chaperones for field trips (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Terriquez, 2011). These conventional forms of parent engagement in schools necessitate parents' physical presence, as well as constrained, hierarchical forms of communication between schools and families (Love et al., 2021). The school-based and -led determinations regarding legitimate forms of family engagement are often based on the behaviors, expectations, and knowledge of White middle- and upper-class families (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Ishimaru et al., 2023).

Consequently, racially minoritized families experience racism in schools when these norms associated with White families are held as the desired standard and are leveraged to frame racially minoritized families as possessing deficient behaviors, knowledge forms, and perspectives (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru et al., 2014). Consequently, the legitimacy of White family norms within school-centric approaches to family engagement justify the denigration of racially minoritized families' contributions to their children's learning and development and exclude racially minoritized families from decision-making processes, resources, and opportunities (Fernández, 2016; Rodela & Bertrand, 2021). Such deficit positionings are often leveraged by educational institutions and actors to blame racially minoritized families for their children's academic underachievement and absolve these institutions from addressing the educational and social inequities experienced by racially minoritized families (Kohli et al., 2017; Love et al., 2021). Instead, educational institutions and actors claim that racially minoritized families require training and intervention to address their inherently deficient viewpoints, values, and behaviors (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; McCarthy-Foubert, 2022). These supposed behaviors often center around the languages and related heritage practices of racially minoritized groups (Alvarado, 2022; Baker-Bell, 2020; Li & Qin, 2024).

Latinx Families in Bilingual Educational Programs

In the context of DLBE programs, whose goal is to promote bilingualism and biliteracy, Latinx families are often perceived as having inferior language practices (Valdés, 1996, 2018) or, at worst, lacking language altogether (Rosa, 2016). These programs often expect their members to strictly separate and communicate in two standardized languages (Flores & García, 2017; Freire & Delavan, 2021). Flores (2017) refers to this language expectation as *bilingual hegemonic whiteness*, a hierarchy of bilingualism in which the language acquisition processes of White families are deemed as an idealized bilingualism that produces cognitive benefits. Consequently, DLBE programs frame the dynamic heritage and communicative practices of Latinx families who do not completely align with White-based, standardized language forms as indications that these families possess problematic behaviors and inadequate home learning environments to support standardized bilingual acquisition (Mena & García, 2021). In response, DLBE program educators and staff members may engage in authoritative, remedial, and race-evasive approaches toward working with Latinx families in meeting the demands of these programs (Chávez-Moreno, 2023; Olivos, 2006). These approaches often include pressuring Latinx parents to separate their English and Spanish language use, recommending the parents take adult English classes, and expecting them to comply with tasks and roles mandated by school staff (Freire & Delavan, 2021; Hernández, 2017). If Latinx parents do not conform to these expectations and behaviors, they find themselves at risk of being viewed by school actors as not contributing to and even obstructing their children's education—contradictory yet bounded tropes placed upon Latinx and racially minoritized parents across U.S. schools (Fernández & López, 2017; Gaitán, 2004).

Accordingly, Valdés (1997, 2018) has continually advocated for deep, explicit examination of how issues of race, class, and language permeate the experiences of Latinx families in DLBE programs. In response, Shannon (2011) and Burns (2017) highlighted how the attention to the academic, personal, and professional goals and demands of White middle- and upper-class families overshadows the importance of Latinx families' sustaining their dynamic bilingualism and heritage traditions. These

scholars noted that this imbalance of influence over DLBE programming is exacerbated by White upper- and middle-class families' occupying school leadership positions, wielding tangible influence within DLBE decision-making processes. Muro (2016) warned that White middle- and upper-class families engage with Latinx families in "polite, surface-level interactions that are enjoyable, voluntary, and additive" (p. 517) while continuing to solidify racial stratification and racial prejudices. For instance, Muro (2016) reported that relationships and interactions between Latinx and White families in a DLBE program were polite and friendly but often brief, rarely transcending the school (Muro, 2016). Instead, parents participated in segregated parent organizations and spent time outside of school with their friendship networks, composed of families from the same race and class group (Muro, 2016). Further, Scanlan and Palmer (2009) and Chaparro (2020) identified how racialized ideologies permeate these surface-level, symbolic forms of integration, conflating the experiences of Latinx families in DLBE programs by primarily presenting them as a basis for comparison to those of White middle- and upper-class families. As such, these scholars, along with Olivos and Lucero (2018), argued for layered reporting on Latinx families' varied positionings, access to resources and opportunities, and lived trajectories in DLBE programs. Additionally, Kaveh et al. (2022) noted the limited reporting on the interests of Latinx families in supporting the learning and well-being of children in schools within states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant policy histories.

Latina Mothering and Caretaking during Pandemic Schooling

The COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crises have influenced Latina immigrant mothers' increased responsibility in sustaining the learning, emotional well-being, and physical safety of their children. These mothers attempted to simulate traditional schooling at home as part of their children's transition to remote and hybrid instruction (Bruhn, 2023; Segel et al., 2024). Additionally, they leveraged their social networks and participated in community organizations to advocate for their children's access to educational resources and material supports and seek tutors who could facilitate their children's learning of content and skills expected in schools (Bruhn, 2023; Delgado, 2022; Segel et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the coalescence of socioeconomic inequalities and racialized, anti-immigrant policies often complicate such efforts. For instance, Bruhn (2023) reported how Latina immigrant mothers' economic instability often meant living in close, infection-prone living arrangements; feeling socially isolated from their friends; and being unable to financially or materially provide for their families. Acknowledging her focus on one Northeastern neighborhood, Bruhn recommended further study of Latina immigrant mothers in other educational settings to gain a nuanced understanding of Latina immigrant mothers' support of their children's learning and development during the COVID-19 pandemic in other geographic locations and schooling contexts.

In response, this study extends the nascent literature on Latina immigrant mothers navigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their children's schooling and learning. We do so by providing a layered and intersectional, power-laden analysis of the experiences of Latina immigrant mothers in an alternative educational setting, DLBE, across two state contexts and two modes of instruction (remote and hybrid instruction). Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic context, this study contributes to the literature on families in DLBE programs by examining Latina immigrant mothers' relationships with DLBE programs situated in states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant policy histories and by showcasing Latinx families' enduring yet varied identifications with race, ethnicity, nationality, and language.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory and LatCrit

This article leverages critical race theory (CRT) in education (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) to report how two Latina immigrant mothers supported their children's learning and well-being in DLBE programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. CRT in education helps explain how racial inequities in schools are "logical and predictable results of a White supremacist society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 47) when making sense of the material impact of raced, classed, and gendered oppression. As an extension, LatCrit notes the persistent issues that Latinx groups face: immigration status, linguicism, and nativism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Three key tenets that permeate LatCrit and CRT scholarship inform our study (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001): a) the intersectionality of race and other forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001); b) the importance of centering the lived experiences of racially minoritized groups through counter-stories that speak to dominant, deficit narratives about these groups (Ladson-Billings, 2021a; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001); and c) the centrality of race, racism, and White supremacy within a sociopolitical and historical context (Ladson-Billings, 2021a; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Application of CRT and LatCrit Tenets for This Study

Informed by the above three tenets, this study reports on how the intersections of multiple forms of oppression (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, nationality) permeate school-based forms of family engagement, as well as Latina immigrant mothers' support of their children's educational experiences. We highlight how the focal mothers' lived experiences and perspectives help counter the problematic, dominant assumption that racially minoritized families will be valued and given access to material and social resources based on their positioning as "involved/engaged" parents and if they conform to school- and White-based forms of family engagement. Further, we note how the matrices of oppression experienced by the focal Latina immigrant mothers in their educational settings connect to socio-historical and political phenomena. One such phenomenon is the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on state and local educational programming, as well as material and social resources and opportunities available to families. The other phenomena are the anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant policy histories within the states in which the mothers and children reside: Massachusetts and Arizona.

Application of Community Cultural Wealth for This Study

Yosso and Burciaga (2016) argued that examining the lived experiences of racially minoritized groups through CRT and LatCrit as primary lenses illuminates the "array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and networks possessed and utilized by racially minoritized groups to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 2). These knowledge forms, cultural practices, and relationships are instrumental, sophisticated assets that have been preserved and passed down by generations of racially minoritized groups in their collective negotiations and contestations of oppressive conditions (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016). Yosso (2005) referred to these interdependent, multifaceted assets as community cultural wealth. She identified six forms of capital within community cultural wealth, referring to them as "dynamic processes that build on one another" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The six forms of capital are as follows (Yosso, 2005):

1. Aspirational capital is the capacity to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite the presence of real and perceived barriers.

2. Linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills embedded in dynamic communicative practices that extend beyond standardized languages and dialects.
3. Familial capital is the knowledge traditions passed down and nurtured among families, with responsiveness to flourishing and belonging to broader communities.
4. Social capital consists of the social networks, individuals, and resources that help confront the challenges accompanying forms of oppression.
5. Navigational capital is the skills to maneuver institutions and organizations strategically.
6. Resistant capital is the knowledge traditions utilized to oppose injustices and inequities.

We leverage Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework to highlight how the focal Latina immigrant mothers utilized and nurtured various forms of capital within their negotiations of the social, material, and educational effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We specifically note how the focal mothers utilized these forms of capital to complicate assumptions placed upon racially minoritized parents regarded by DLBE school actors and throughout programming as "engaged/involved." As such, we aim to interrogate the assumed connection between the label "engaged/involved" and access to leadership opportunities, decision-making spaces, and social and material acquisition in schools (Olivos & Lucero, 2018). Aligned with Yosso's (2005) claims about the interdependent and overlapping nature of the forms of capital, this study also describes how the focal mothers' actions, understandings, and relations are indications of several forms of capital.

Place and Participants

This research was generated from two multi-year ethnographic studies focusing on the experiences of families in DLBE programs in Arizona (2019–2022) and Massachusetts (2019–2022). In the Arizona study, Yalda supported administrators, teachers, parents/caregivers, and children in their DLBE program expansion in 2020. She conducted observations of DLBE department meetings between 2019 and 2021 and interviewed six teachers in 2020. The expansion of the DLBE model across all kindergarten classes and the shift to online schooling in the fall of 2020 led Yalda to focus on the kindergarten cohort of families through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations of online schooling during the 2020–2021 academic year. The three-year Massachusetts study (2019–2022) focused on understanding family engagement policy and the ways in which family-school relations are conceptualized within policy text and by different school and community actors within a K–5 DLBE school. The Massachusetts study included 50 participants, composed of administrators, educators, community affiliates, children, and parents/caretakers. Data generation in the larger study comprised semi-structured interviews; school, classroom, and participant artifacts; observational field notes; and secondary sources related to the school and neighborhood. This research study emerged from Jasmine's numerous conversations and meetings with instructional coaches, administrators, classroom teachers, and families during her time volunteering and substitute teaching at the school from 2018 to 2019.

The state contexts of the two studies, Arizona and Massachusetts, are critical for understanding the experiences of Latina mothers of bi/multilingual children. They were two of three states that passed state language policy legislation in the early 2000s that aimed to promote English-only education and eradicate bilingual programs. In 2017, Massachusetts overturned its English-only language legislation with minimal guidance for supporting the creation and maintenance of bilingual programs (Alvarado & Proctor, 2023). In 2019, Arizona passed a bipartisan legislative measure to cut back the 4 hours of mandated English instruction and allow students access to bilingual education (Kaveh et al., 2022). Since 2023, however, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne,

has been attempting to dismiss DLBE programs as valid educational models under the 2000 mandate (Bernstein et al., 2024).

Besides their history of English-only state language policies, the two states share several trends regarding racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic disparities. Based on the U.S. Census (2020), Hispanic/Latinx individuals comprise the largest, self-identified non-White population in both states (Table 1). Similarly, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in both states. Given the significant number of Latinx people and Spanish speakers, particularly among youth enrolled in public schools, the anti-bilingual educational policies that were ratified and implemented in Arizona and Massachusetts were highly problematic.

Table 1

Demographic Information About the Participants' States and Neighborhoods

		Arizona		Massachusetts	
		Neighborhood	State	Neighborhood	State
Race/ Ethnicity %	Latinx	45.1	32.5	19.8	13.1
	White	27.9	52.9	61.6	69.6
	Black/African American	10.4	5.5	4.9	9.5
	Asian	3.8	3.9	10.8	7.7
	Native American	2.5	5.2	0.3	0.5
	Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	2.8	0.3	0.1	0.1
	Other	4.7	0.4	0.1	1.31
	Two or more races	2.8	3.2	2.3	2.7
Non-U.S. born %		20.4	12.6	25.1	17.6
Languages Spoken at Home %	English	52	73.4	69.5	75.6
	Spanish	43.9	20.1	14.9	9.4

	Other Indo-European languages	2.3	2.0	7.4	9.1
	Asian or Pacific Island languages	0.6	2.0	6.8	4.4
	Other languages	0.7	2.4	1.0	1.5
Median Household Income		$38,364	$78,845	$101,177	$112,534
Renter Occupied Homes %	City Data	82	32	57	37
	American Census Survey	43.9	34.2	50.2	37.6

While the general population of Arizona has a more significant number of Latinx individuals, the focal school districts in Arizona and Massachusetts both predominantly enrolled Latinx students from 2022 to 2023 (Table 2). Similar to the state trends, Spanish is the largest non-English language spoken by the residents of the focal neighborhoods. The student populations in the two selected schools reflected the state and school district patterns in terms of their racial and ethnic demographics, with the majority of the students in both schools identifying as Latinx (Table 2).

Although the two participating schools both had Spanish-English DLBE programs, they followed different educational models and methods for selecting students. In Massachusetts, the DLBE program is a 90:10 model, in which the amount of heritage language instruction (Spanish) decreases yearly as teaching in English increases, until there is a 50:50 balance of language in grades four and five. Since the bilingual program's formation in 2015, each kindergarten cohort of 50 students has been chosen by lottery, which is open to all families in the neighborhood, during the summer. School administrators and staff utilize parents'/guardians' answers to the following question on the home language survey to designate a student's dominant language: "What language did your child first understand and speak?" If a parent/guardian chooses Spanish in the survey, their child is coded as a Spanish speaker and potentially an English learner to later take a state-adopted language screener. The student's score on the screener determines whether they obtain the label English Learner (EL).

In contrast, the Arizona school implemented a 50:50 model for DLBE, which separates daily instruction into 50% English and 50% Spanish (García, 2009). This school has always offered two program pathways: a two-way DLBE program and a monolingual English program. Until 2020, the DLBE program was offered only to English monolingual and English-proficient bi/multilingual students due to English-only state educational policies that prohibited students classified as EL from accessing DLBE until they showed proficiency on standardized English language assessments. Following the 2019 legislation in Arizona, schools were allowed to teach English to emergent bi/multilinguals through DLBE and other research-based approaches (Kaveh et al., 2022). This

change allowed the Arizona school to enroll all kindergarteners, including ELs, in the DLBE program in 2020.[1]

Table 2
Student Demographics at the School, District, and State Levels

		AZ School	District	State	MA School	District	State
	Hispanic/Latinx	86.85	78.7	47.59	71	45.5	24.2
Race/ Ethnicity %	White	*	5.8	34.93	21	38.4	54.4
	Black/African American	7.35	10.1	5.6	4	8.5	9.4
	Asian	0	0.8	3.08	0	4.8	7.3
	Native American	2.71	2.1	4.2	0	.1	0.2
	Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	*[2]	*	< 0.2	0	.1	0.1
	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	*	2.4	4.16	4	2.8	4.4
Students Labeled as English Learner %		20	23	10	46	24.3	13.1

The two participants were selected from the larger studies through purposive and critical case sampling. The participants shared a few characteristics: a) they were caretakers/parents of children in the focal DLBE programs; b) they self-identified as Latina/x, Hispanic, and/or from a Latin American ancestry; and c) they were described by DLBE staff members and educators as "engaged/involved" parents. This unique positioning of "engaged/involved" led to the two focal participants representing critical cases (Hernández & Murakami, 2016). Although various scholarship on family-school relationships has distinguished the terms *engaged* and *involved* (Ishimaru et al., 2023), we highlight their interchangeable usage by participants from our larger studies.

Despite sharing common characteristics, these two Latina mothers also represented critical differences in their lived experiences and journeys as Latina immigrants. Below is a brief overview of each focal mother regarding the following characteristics: a) race and ethnicity; b) languages of communication; c) professional occupation; d) country of origin; and e) time of residence in the U.S.

[1] At the time of writing this article in 2024, the 2019 policy has been challenged by the new State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the DLBE program has been paused for a year.
[2] * When a group had 10 or fewer students, the data on the Arizona school used an asterisk to protect the individual students' anonymity. The MA school used '0' in those cases.

Paloma. Paloma referred to herself as a mother of three children. Two of her children attended the focal Arizona DLBE program and were in kindergarten and fourth grade. At the time of the study, Paloma identified as Mexican and Hispanic. She moved to the U.S. at a young age and had lived in the focal Arizona neighborhood for at least 10 years. Paloma learned English when attending Arizona's English-monolingual schools. She mostly communicated in Spanish with Yalda and her research assistant and considered herself bilingual in English and Spanish. She had a high school diploma and was mainly a stay-at-home mother, occasionally making and delivering food with her husband.

Lupe. Lupe referred to herself as a mother of two children, Michael and Carmela, both students in the Massachusetts DLBE program. At the time of the study, her children were 7 and 8 years old and were in the second and third grade. Lupe identified as Salvadorian, Latina, and Hispana. She moved to the U.S. when she was 21 and had lived in the focal neighborhood for 14 years. Lupe communicated with Jasmine in English and Spanish but did not consider herself bilingual. She was a school aide for the DLBE program during the COVID-19 pandemic. On Fridays and during the weekend, Lupe ran her business of making pupusas from her house.

Relationality with Place and Participants

Our experiences and relationships with the focal neighborhoods and participants shaped our interpretations of the topics of study and our presentations of the focal mothers' counter-stories. Jasmine describes herself as an Ecuadorian, bilingual, and Latina who lived in Massachusetts for 6 years. She considers herself a Breezer, a label that many of the participants from her larger study use to describe someone who did not grow up in the neighborhood but resides there and who may move to another place in the future. She cultivated relationships and consistently interacted with these individuals because she was a substitute teacher and volunteer at the school from 2018 to 2022 and could communicate bilingually in English and Spanish. The majority of the Latinx parents, like Lupe, who self-identified as being from a Central American country perceived Jasmine as a fellow member of this group. After several initial interactions, they asked Jasmine what country she was from and sometimes even directly asked if she was from a specific country, such as El Salvador or Mexico. Lupe and several other parents often contacted Jasmine via email or phone and/or invited her to their homes to seek clarification about the school's instructional program and initiatives.

Yalda identifies as a multilingual Iranian immigrant woman. She was first introduced to the school in 2019 through a colleague to help with the expansion of the DLBE program and increased use of Spanish in K–8 DLBE classrooms. Despite the differences in ethnoracial and linguistic identifications, she found shared experiences of racialization, linguicism, and identity development with the DLBE staff. Additionally, she recognized a sense of authentic *cariño* (Noddings, 1984) in her interactions with the DLBE team, which entailed "both interpersonal and institutional care" and a "dynamic interplay of familial, intellectual, and critical care" (Curry, 2016, p. 884). In consultation with the DLBE leadership and classroom teachers, Yalda focused on supporting the families and teachers of the kindergarten cohort when the mode of instruction shifted to online learning during the 2020–2021 academic year and the COVID-19 pandemic. She interacted with Paloma and the other mothers from the larger study through virtual classroom observations, read-aloud activities, and interviews. During the interviews, Yalda and the mothers discussed their shared experiences with immigration, living far from loved ones, and challenges living in the U.S. as racially minoritized immigrant women.

As co-authors, we acknowledge that our experiences are not universal and that different people may experience the same events differently. Further, we acknowledge our social locations as

researchers affiliated with higher education, which, as an institution, continues to encourage the extraction and exploitation of multiply-minoritized groups. In response, we conversed with participants to obtain feedback and interrogated our assumptions and experiential knowledge within our memos. Despite the conclusion of data generation and analysis, we continue to be accountable to our larger studies' participants through ongoing dialogue and mobilization with them about leveraging findings from our studies for their goals, priorities, and flourishing.

Methodology

This study was designed through the lens of counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to understand the complex life stories and personhood of two Latina immigrant mothers and contest damage-centered narratives pathologizing their identities and roles in their children's education and development. Rooted in CRT, counter-storytelling is a method of elevating stories from racially minoritized peoples whose experiences have historically been omitted in educational and societal discourse (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The various forms of counter-storytelling include comparative and complementary analysis, composite counter-stories, and thematic counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is guided by the principles of "integrity, authenticity, sincerity, righteousness, and justice" (Atwood & López, 214, p. 1145). Accordingly, we portray the focal mothers' lives not as "settled discourses, but as portals of meaning that present new possibilities and solidarities" (Vossoughi, 2022, p.173). Specifically, we highlight how these mothers' diverse lived experiences and perspectives rupture traditional forms of engagement and the essentialization of Latinx families in schools, particularly in bilingual programs.

Data Generation

Data generation consisted of three semi-structured, in-depth interviews and verbatim interview transcripts (60–120 minutes each through place and virtual mediums); memos generated after participant interviews; and field notes from ethnographic observations in school-wide and classroom events (240 hours each for observations through place and virtual mediums). Our observation protocols comprised two columns documenting thick descriptions and our analytical thoughts during observations. Observational notes included a) conversations among participants and direct phrases from them; b) descriptions of location, modality, and time; c) artifacts used by participants; d) participation structures within the location (e.g., whole group, pair, small group); and e) whether certain participants were present or absent in activities observed as part of the larger studies. For the purpose of this paper, we analyzed observational notes involving the focal mothers.

The interviews covered the following topics: a) personal and educational histories, b) classroom and school events, c) interactions with school staff and members, and d) relationships and interactions with their children. However, these interviews were flexible in discussing concerns related to specific school or classroom-related events, the ongoing pandemic, neighborhood issues, and comments made by other educational or community stakeholders. Further, we discussed with the participants moments from observations we found significant or unexpected in relation to the topics of study. After conducting each interview, we wrote field notes and reflective memos. Within these notes and memos, we recorded impressions, salient themes, interruptions or unexpected events, and general interview milieu. The memos supplemented our understanding of the mothers' experiences and perspectives as we coded interview transcriptions and observational notes during the analysis process.

Data Analysis

The counter-stories were created through an iterative analytical approach. As two scholars who share similar research interests, we have served as thought partners for our respective larger ethnographic studies. Within our conversations, we noted similarities in the focal mothers' positioning as "engaged/involved" and negotiations of this bounded labeling within our two bilingual programs and state contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Having identified this critical similarity, we each returned to our individual data and used thematic coding (Saldaña, 2015) for the first phase of data analysis. In this phase, we documented instances in the interviews and observations in which we witnessed the mothers making sense of expected roles and responsibilities for parents in their bilingual program and the multiple forms of support and care available for their children during unprecedented schooling conditions (RQ1). The initial thematic coding was guided by CRT theoretical orientations, the literature on family engagement and bi/multilingual family planning, as well as our professional and personal experiences (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Examples of initial codes included the following terms: class/lesson and school-wide activities, forms of participation in class/lesson and school-wide activities, mothers' access to and support for their children's curricular and instructional programming, and opportunities to advocate and critique instruction and programming.

In the second stage of our analysis, we each composed one focal mother's counter-story based on the thematic analysis. We were intentional about answering our first research question by writing counter-stories that presented the mothers' experiences, priorities, and critiques as holistic narratives of people instead of categorized objects of data. As Cook and Dixson (2013) explained, "Individual experiences that people have with racism and discrimination cannot represent the collective experiences that people of color have with racism and discrimination" (p.1243). As we independently continued to refine key themes and excerpts for each mother's counter-story, we served as each other's peer debriefers (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985) and provided feedback on our analytical procedures, particularly our triangulation of multiple data sources.

In the third phase of analysis, we, as co-authors, collaboratively engaged in axial coding as we frequently met to identify larger patterns across our initial coding schemes, the mothers' counter-stories, and discrepant data (LeCompte & Schensul, 2012). During this process, we focuses on the six forms of capital the mothers leveraged to support their children (RQ2). The process enabled us to highlight the mothers' similarities and differences within their forms of support, care, and interrogations of deficit practices, understandings, and positionings. Furthermore, this comparative case analysis (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008) enabled us to leverage our individual expertise, compare and contrast cases, and generate enduring understandings of the topics and contexts of focus (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). The comparative case analysis also highlighted the six forms of capital that the mothers utilized to engage in their children's schooling and education: linguistic, social, resistant, navigational, aspirational, and familial forms of community cultural wealth. Throughout our fourth and final stage of the analysis and writing process, we refined our interpretations of the focal mothers' interactions, observations, and critiques that permeated their counter-stories by ensuring these counter-stories explicitly referenced the mothers' deployment of community cultural wealth.

Findings

The counter-stories reflect the experiences and relationships of two Latina immigrant mothers, Lupe and Paloma, in DLBE programs located in states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant policy histories. Such policy contexts exacerbated the material, financial, and social constraints in DLBE programs aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including reduced school staff, limited curricular

and instructional resources, and rigid approaches toward content and language learning. Nevertheless, Lupe and Paloma shared a deep commitment to sustaining their children's language and heritage practices, biliteracy teaching and learning, and socioemotional and physical wellness. The following section first presents Lupe's counter-story, followed by Paloma's. Within each counter-story, we note how these mothers deployed various forms of community cultural wealth in their negotiations and resistance of various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, linguicism, nativism) that permeated their experiences and relations during dual language bilingual pandemic schooling.

Lupe

Lupe became a part-time school aide in the Massachusetts-based DLBE program two years after her first child, Michael, enrolled in kindergarten there. At the time, Lupe was working from home and running her *pupusa* delivery business. The school's principal regularly ordered *pupusas* from Lupe for the school staff, and after learning of Lupe's family's financial hardships and needing more staff who spoke Spanish, the principal offered Lupe a school aide position at the DLBE program. Besides this need for bilingual school staff, shared by DLBE programs across the U.S. (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2019), the DLBE program had limited resources and personnel as one of the few bilingual programs in the aftermath of the Question 2 ballot in 2002, which banned bilingual education programming across Massachusetts (De Jong et al., 2005). During one staff meeting, the principal explained Lupe's employment as a school aide and her rationale for this decision:

> Although Lupe has her *pupusa* business, she is in need of secure employment. So I have invited her to join us as a school aide. She will be really helpful because we are in desperate need of more Spanish-speaking staff. You know, since we are in a state with limited Spanish-speaking teachers and low recruitment of bilingual ones. (Staff Meeting Field Note, 11/3/20)

Thus, Lupe's employment at the DLBE program was made possible by her linguistic and social capital, which were reflected in her relationship with the principal and the school's need for Spanish-speaking staff.

Like most DLBE school staff, Lupe assumed multiple roles and responsibilities across grade levels. She explained,

> I always help every grade level. Although I focus on the grades where my children are, I help during lunch, recess, and school events. If other grades need someone for reading in Spanish, I assist. I am told that I am a very attentive and involved mother many times. However, I am not really engaged like some other parents who have lots of say in things. (Interview, 03/18/21)

In her commentary, Lupe noted how various school staff members and administrators explicitly viewed her as an "engaged and attentive parent." At the same time, she viewed other parents as engaged because of their tangible influence over the functioning of the school.

Although Lupe was invited to participate in parent forums and initiatives at the DLBE program, she explained her limited decision-making power in those settings:

> Other parents lead family events and are in other rooms with the principal and teachers. I have gone to some of those meetings, but as a member, to listen and see what is going on. I have not been invited to direct and say when or how they should take place. Like the time when the school had to decide on a new name, I was invited by another parent, a White parent. She was

> one of the parent leaders of the family teacher association. They already had, like, a selection of names to choose, though. (Interview, 5/2/21)

As Lupe mentioned, the elected leaders of the parent-teacher group, along with some teacher representatives, hosted two hybrid meetings, in English and Spanish, to choose a new name for the DLBE school (Meeting Field Notes, 03/25/21). The elected leaders of the parent-teacher group, mostly composed of people from White and middle-class groups, argued for the name of the program to be changed into one incorporating the name of a renowned Latinx person (Meeting Field Note, 03/25/21). Before the first meeting of this initiative, the principal disclosed the process of how this initiative came to fruition:

> Principal: I am still not sure that the name change is a big concern to Latino and the low-income families because it just came from the parent leaders.
> Jasmine: How did that start?
> Principal: They came to me and told me that the name should be about a Hispanic person due to the cultural roots of the program. I told them to create a way that would show that, like a voting process. They picked a group of names for the others to go vote, but the final vote would need to reflect the majority. (School-wide Field Note, 3/25/21)

The principal's remarks highlighted the expectation that the parent leaders would obtain a count of votes representing the majority of families composing the school. In response, one of the leaders of the parent-teacher group reached out to Lupe to persuade her to attend the meeting to vote on a new school name. Lupe's description of herself as a mere participant and the principal's skepticism about the school initiative being a priority for Latinx families demonstrate the severity of the prescriptive and asymmetrical nature within DLBE family initiatives and forums, in which racially minoritized parents' voices and perspectives are not consistently at the forefront in driving such programming (Rodela & Bertrand, 2021).

Lupe's constrained positioning remained the same despite multiple shifts in the modality of instruction and programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless, Lupe displayed aspirational capital by welcoming opportunities to engage in various school-related forums and collectives where she could influence their time, structure, and focus. She elaborated, "If I had the opportunity to have more say about the school's priorities and when and what the programs and groups are for, I would be open even though we are in the pandemic" (Interview, 5/2/2021). However, she later expressed her concern about the separate and rigid language expectations within the bilingual program's committees and forums:

> It is that in a lot of those conversations and groups for parents, English rules, and I am not comfortable speaking only in that language. Even in Spanish I do not feel totally comfortable. Like here, it is a lot of Spanish from Spain or sometimes from regions of Guatemala. I am not from there. (Interview, 5/2/21)

Lupe pointed out how these forums, like the above school-naming initiative, upheld standardized English and particular varieties of Spanish. She exemplified her resistant capital to such norms when she communicated these concerns to the family-school liaison, Claudia, during a third-grade lunch period:

> *Lupe and Claudia (the family-liaison) are helping throw out the student trays. Claudia asks her opinion about the school-naming meetings.* Lupe says, "It's a great example of how strict language expectations

> are here. Like even in Spanish ones, Latino parents can't feel comfortable unless it's Spanish like from Spain or if you are Guatemalan."
> *Claudia nods and faces the floor.* Claudia says, "I'm sorry, Lupe. It's unfortunately an implicit rule here of having to speak the right English or the right Spanish like the Whites or Spaniards, or at least Guatemalan Spanish, still not all the other Hispanics." (School-wide Field Note, 4/08/21)

Claudia's and Lupe's commentary about the expected language norms at the school augments various warnings (Flores et al., 2020; Valdés, 1997, 2018) about how DLBE programs may delegitimize the dynamic bilingualism of Latinx families by enforcing the expectation that they compartmentalize their language into standardized, European-based forms of English and Spanish. Further, Lupe's concerns suggest how Latinx families' Spanish forms may be essentialized in DLBE programs through the premise that Latinx families communicate in one variety of the Spanish language. Consequently, Latinx parents, like Lupe, may internalize the belief that desired language practices are *elsewhere*, not within their communicative practices (Mena & García, 2021), or worse, that they are *languageless*, that they lack proficiency in any language (Rosa, 2016).

Despite these racialized and nativist framings about Latinx families' languages in the bilingual program, Lupe consistently leveraged her dynamic linguistic capital and navigational capital when the modality of instruction shifted to online and hybrid approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, she often led class sessions online and in-person when teachers were absent and the substitute teacher did not speak Spanish due to the limited availability of substitute teachers in the school district (School-wide Field Note, 2/12/21; 3/21/21). When one third-grade teacher was absent, Jasmine noticed Lupe's preparation before the school day began:

> *The teacher is out sick, and the substitute teacher has yet to arrive. Today, the second half of third graders are coming for in-person instruction. However, I see Lupe already with the classroom laptop, looking at it as she puts the schedule for today on the easel and Google Classroom.*
> Jasmine: Do you need any help?
> Lupe: Hi, Ms. Jasmine! I'm good. I have the websites ready for the online kids and the materials for the ones coming. I would love your help telling the sub when she comes with something. I was told by the secretary already that she doesn't speak Spanish.
> Jasmine: Like what?
> Lupe: *Shows me in the laptop the groups for the children for small-group work for literacy and other activities in the day.* She says,"I would love your help with the sub putting them into these groups. I will probably lead most periods and read the books in Spanish. You are welcome to join." (Classroom Field Note, 2/12/21)

Through her agenda setting and literacy support, Lupe contested her positioning as a compliant school member with inferior language practices by facilitating learning across languages and collaborative meaning-making and interpretation among the entire class. As such, she supported various students' content and language learning in the DLBE program.

When a classroom teacher was absent for several days, Lupe disclosed how other Latina mothers asked her if she could give them updates about their children's socioemotional and physical well-being:

> Some mothers asked me to see how their children were in terms of their physical, emotional, or mental health. They wanted to know if they had time to drink water, walk, or go to the bathroom. If I was not in class with them, I would see the children during lunch or recess to

> check how they were and then talk to the mothers during dismissal or on the phone. That was more what they wanted to know. (Interview, 3/18/21)

In her remarks, Lupe described how she embedded time within her work schedule to connect with other children during mask break, recess, and lunch so that she could inform other mothers about their children's well-being, including their children's access to school spaces and routines promoting health and wellness. During one of Lupe's preparation periods, Jasmine witnessed Lupe conversing with another Latina mother over the phone regarding that her daughter's health and academic activities:

> *Lupe confirms with Claribel [one mother] that she was able to see her daughter during first grade's class mask break outside in the schoolyard. Today, Lupe was helping out mostly second grade, so she stepped out for a bit.*
> Lupe: She said they were learning about whales and the ocean during reading time.
> Claribel: That's great. Linda [daughter] likes the ocean!
> Lupe: She also felt her masks were too tight and the rest were dirty. So right before going back to class, I went to get some more from the nurse's office for her.
> Claribel: I'm so grateful for you. Ok, I will make sure to get some more masks later.
> (Classroom Field Note, 2/26/21)

Claribel's remarks reveal her appreciation of Lupe for not only being able to communicate about her child's learning but also for trying to proactively address her daughter's issues impacting her safety, comfort, and success during pandemic schooling. Indeed, Latina and racially minoritized mothers engaged in additional labor and form relationships to protect and nurture their children's minds, bodies, and spirits in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bruhn, 2023; Delgado, 2022).

Lupe confided her perspective about the emphasis at the DLBE program on recovering learning loss—particularly language loss—over the development and health of children during the global pandemic:

> We must ensure that children are well in all of their health and have activities at school to promote this. I know that one of the goals of this program is to be bilingual, but it's a lot this emphasis during the pandemic and not about being healthy. I say this opinion to the teachers, and almost all agree. (Interview, 5/2/21)

Although Lupe acknowledged that one of the main goals of a DLBE program is to promote biliteracy and bilingualism, she was concerned that this goal was overshadowing the importance of embedding activities to promote the health and well-being of the children, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During one common planning period for third-grade teachers, Lupe inquired about opportunities for movement breaks and community walks:

> *Lupe is putting away materials in the classroom as the third-grade teachers meet for their lesson planning. They are putting intended objectives for each class period for next week's activities. As the teachers are brainstorming activities, Lupe inquires*, "Excuse me. I have a question. Are there breaks for the kids during the day?"
> Teacher: Yes, of course. We have scheduled in mask breaks and they have gym.
> Lupe: I think they need more chances to move around, like movement breaks with sing-alongs in English and Spanish. *Lupe takes out her phone and shows the teachers some videos on YouTube and some recorded by her and her children.*

> Teacher 1: I think we can put some 10–15 minute movement breaks too.
> Lupe: I can also ask the parents if they have recommendations of songs or dances.
> Teacher 2: That would be amazing!
> Lupe: One more thing. When we do mask breaks, we can extend those a bit to do mini-community walks? Like right now, they are doing lessons about how to participate in the neighborhood. You know, for social studies.
> *The teachers nod, and one of them says,* "Thanks, we will give that some more thought." (Classroom Field Note, 3/4/21)

In such a way, Lupe employs her resistant and navigational capital by disclosing these sentiments to several teachers and recommending that they integrate the students' home and community-centered activities, forms of familial capital.

However, Lupe was skeptical that there would be substantial changes to the teachers' planning and scheduling of lessons and activities across the school:

> But then I do not see anything has changed in the classes, although I tell them some things I do at home or I see other people doing. It is like the government wants us to continue as if everything is like how it was before, just focus on learning content and language. (Interview, 5/2/21)

Here, Lupe suggests that teachers' singular focus on learning standardized language varieties and key subject-area understandings is influenced by governmental entities' and policymakers' demands and expectations for teaching and learning across U.S. schools. Lupe's critique regarding teachers' pressure to return to the problematic normality of decontextualized, linear forms of education is a form of her resistant capital. This capital relates to Ladson-Billings's (2021b) recommendation of rejecting such a return because schools are continuously shielded from societal inequities while still being framed as quick fixes for these oppressions.

Nevertheless, Lupe remained hopeful that schools would move toward this re-set, as she continued to facilitate activities with the help of teachers and classes where she frequently participated. Lupe shared,

> The teachers that I work closer with have put more time for the day for children to dance, sing, or move, also how to make art, like drawing or building things. Other times meditation or how to breathe deeply. For mothers in the other classes, I try to give them advice where they can go, like library programs or names of organizations. Hopefully our schools can have these opportunities in the future as the norm. (Interview, 5/2/21)

Even when the DLBE program returned to full-time in-person instruction, Lupe continued to share flyers and contacts with other mothers for opportunities and organizations that would encourage their children's multimodal forms of expression, health, and wellness (Alvarado, 2024b). She leveraged aspirational capital to dream of another reality in schools in which children are holistically nurtured and can make sense of ideas through different modes of expression.

Paloma

Paloma enrolled her daughter, Lucia, in the Arizona DLBE program because she wanted Lucia to sustain her bilingualism like her two older children, one of whom attended fourth grade in the same

program. Paloma's aspirational capital is reflected in her choice of school for her daughter, in that she considered bilingualism to be an asset for Lucia's future:

> I really believe that speaking two or more languages, whether it's English and Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, or whatever, I think is very important. Speaking two languages or more makes anyone smarter, but it helps more, the more you know, you can develop more languages. I think it's going to be a big help. (Interview, 1/29/21)

According to Paloma, she and her husband mainly spoke Spanish at home, but her children, particularly Lucia, mostly spoke English with one another. Paloma first addressed this shift by trying to speak only in Spanish to her children. However, she observed an increased use of English at home as her children went through K–12 schooling. Subsequently, using her linguistic capital, Paloma decided to communicate across Spanish and English varieties to ensure Lucia understood her:

> I talk to them when they don't understand me. I speak more English with the little girl sometimes so that she understands what I'm saying because she doesn't understand me. But it's not like she has a long conversation every day in English (Interview, 1/29/21).

This expansive use of languages is *translanguaging*, which refers to fluid language practices that bi/multilinguals utilize to make sense of their relationships and experiences (García, 2009). Translanguaging is an everyday communicative practice across communities and contexts, such as bilingual households, DLBE programs, and even monolingual educational programs with bilingual students (García, 2009).

Besides responding to the language practices at home, Paloma observed and analyzed dynamic language practices in her daughter's classroom, which was enabled by online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, relying on her navigational and resistant capitals, Paloma raised concerns over the under-examined, interchangeable use of English and Spanish by the teachers and students in her daughter's DLBE classes. Yalda's observations of classroom instruction and curriculum planning meetings with the teachers confirmed that they relied on translanguaging to ensure that all students and their parents understood the content, regardless of the assigned language of instruction (Kaveh & Buckband, 2024). During an interview, the designated Spanish teacher confirmed this stance: "If they ask me a question in English during Spanish lessons, I will respond to them in Spanish so that they can think in Spanish. . . . That's the goal—that they can go back and forth in English and Spanish" (Kaveh & Estrella-Bridges, 2024, p.13).

Paloma understood that the teachers had to translate content in both languages during designated English and Spanish time because some students had emergent proficiencies in standardized English and Spanish. She also acknowledged that her daughter was increasingly comfortable communicating in Spanish. However, her resistant capital, coupled with the aspirational capital of standardized bilingualism, convinced her that separating languages would be in her daughter's best interest since she worried that language mixing would lead to confusion:

> I feel like that's what's confusing her a little because it's not completely in English or completely in Spanish. Instead of saying a sentence in Spanish, she says one word in English and one in Spanish—the same way they talk at school. I think it is helping her because they speak more Spanish, but not in the way that I thought it would be for her. (Interview, 1/29/21)

Paloma's goal for her daughter was to compose sentences in Spanish: "Because she tells us, 'I want to come.' What I want is for her to tell me, 'Yo quiero comer,' or 'It's time to dormir,' she tells me. What I want is for her to speak [Spanish] completely" (Interview, 1/29/21).

Paloma's preference for language separation is rooted in ideologies of language purism, positing a singular appropriate and standard form of language (Martínez et al., 2015; Pontier & Ortega, 2021). Paloma's beliefs are not uncommon among bi/multilingual parents, particularly for those who are from racially minoritized groups. The language beliefs of these parents are shaped by their encounters with dominant language ideologies that permeate schools, which frame proficiency in standardized, White- and European-influenced languages as catalysts for elevating social status and socioeconomic mobility (Kaveh & Sandoval, 2020). Even in DLBE programs designed to promote bilingualism, the mandated separation of standardized languages contributes to ideologies of linguistic purism. Although Yalda observed Lucia's teachers resisting language separation in the DLBE program through translanguaging (Kaveh & Buckband, 2024), the impact of dominant societal and institutional language ideologies' favoring language separation dissuaded Paloma from accepting translanguaging during class instruction. However, Paloma embraced translanguaging at home during other non-instructional moments. Such misalignment between language decisions across the home and school is often the result of the school's communicating to families through *unspoken dialogues* (Kaveh, 2020) aimed to ensure that children acquire standardized languages expected at school while sustaining heritage-related and other language varieties.

Online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic required Paloma, like many other parents worldwide, to replicate learning conditions similar to schools at home (Bruhn, 2023; Orellana et al., 2022)—in addition to her preexisting responsibilities. Yalda observed Paloma often in the background, supporting Lucia when she needed academic support. Even during her interview, Paloma was juggling multiple roles at home:

> Mom is in the kitchen on her phone on Zoom, cooking food while engaged in the interview. Behind her is a large refrigerator with pictures of children and stickers on it, as well as paintings/cultural pieces of art, which adorn the walls. Mom walks around the house to see what the children are doing while she is in the interview—highlights the continuing role of parenting during the pandemic. (Post-Interview Memo, 2/16/21)

During the interview, Paloma confirmed that being a stay-at-home mother allowed her to support her children's learning and well-being in multiple ways, including providing emotional support, supervising their time on tasks, emphasizing learning as a journey, and highlighting the importance of independence (Post-Interview Memo, 2/16/21). She observed that her position differed from that of working parents who could not provide the same level of support: "Many who work, I hear them say, 'Don't talk to me because I'm in a meeting'" (Interview, 1/29/21). Nevertheless, Paloma had to juggle other responsibilities, such as providing meals and snacks during lunch and recess breaks and managing her household.

Indeed, Yalda noted that the teachers began calling Paloma and all other parents and caregivers "co-teachers" during the school 2021–2022 year to signal that, more than ever, parents were partners in their children's education (Kaveh & Buckband, 2024). This framing of parents as co-teachers went beyond verbal affirmations, as the teachers regularly relied on parents' community cultural wealth for help regarding language use, technology (Zoom and online assessments), knowledge of content areas (including science and mathematics), and heritage traditions (e.g., Reyes Magos, Mexican Independence Day, etc.; Kaveh & Buckband, 2024). For instance, around Mexican Independence Day, Mrs. Trejo, the assigned English teacher, invited parents to share their childhood memories around this holiday or other national holidays from their countries of origin in the language of their choice.

When Mrs. Trejo invited Paloma to share in Spanish, Paloma initially said, "I don't have nice memories. . . . They brought us here when we were very young because my father died in Mexico. So there is nothing like something nice to remember" (Classroom Field Note, 9/16/20).

Affirming Paloma's childhood experiences in Mexico, Mrs. Trejo acknowledged that "life can be very difficult, but encouraged Paloma to think of any cherished childhood moments with her family" (Classroom Field Note, 9/16/2020). After some pause, Paloma shared, in Spanish, that as she grew up in a sea town in Mexico, her father caught and sold turtle eggs to support his family:

> The turtles came out of the sea, make a hole, lay their egg, and cover them. So people took care of them. When the turtles return to the sea, they uncovered the sand and took out all the eggs, and sold them as if they were chicken eggs. (Classroom Field Note, 9/16/20)

Mrs. Trejo translated Paloma's story into English for those who did not speak Spanish and reaffirmed her familial capital by highlighting her father's navigational capital:

> Wow, boys and girls! I had not heard about that before. I hadn't even thought about the turtles coming up and laying eggs. And then you being able to, like he would sell them. That's how he would make money because he needed to nourish his children. That's what parents and grandparents do: is they help their children. (Classroom Field Note, 9/16/20)

During several lessons near the winter holidays, Yalda observed families (including parents, siblings, pets, and stuffed animals) partaking in various festivities, which consisted of creating handicrafts, sharing Christmas stories and heritage traditions, and dancing along with music (Observational Field Note, 12/18/20). In fact, she noticed that Paloma and other parents maintained a strong sense of community-building in the virtual classrooms, in contrast to the traditional, hierarchical relationships between educational institutions and families:

> It is truly a family affair! I almost don't want schools to go back to normal because we lose special moments like this. The teacher's teaching during this year has established such a break from the definition of school as an imposing place (Observation Field Note, 12/18/20)

After the classes returned to in-person instruction during late spring 2021, Mrs. Trejo echoed this loss of community and support from parents like Paloma: "The thing I miss the most is the families. The 22 families we don't have in our lives anymore. I miss them. I grieve losing that. I miss having the parents who would help as co-teachers" (Planning Meeting Field Note, 5/5/21).

Paloma also appreciated this partnership with the teachers, as well as the increased communication and access to her daughter's virtual classrooms. However, she also noted that the sudden increase in family engagement had several ramifications, which included worrying about her daughter's overreliance on her as a co-teacher, being unsettled by her daughter's limited concentration during online learning, and navigating multiple parenting and co-teaching responsibilities while being concerned about the limitations of co-teachers' decision-making power and roles at school. During her interview, Paloma contextualized her concerns by revisiting her daughter's schooling experience in the previous year. Paloma recalled Lucia being a more proactive and curious learner in preschool. In contrast, she found her daughter to be less focused and more reliant on her during online instruction and programming:

> I think that way it is good that we help the children, but at the same time, the children while they are with the parents, do not give 100% because I have seen it. When my daughter was in preschool, she would come to me with papers made by her, with songs, with everything. . . . Now I'm here at home, being with her because if I don't sit down with her, she doesn't finish everything, or she tells me, 'Help me cut,' or 'Help me do it.' I think as a co-teacher, I am there with her, but in part, I feel that we are not doing good by her because they know that they have help from us, they do not give their 100%. (Interview, 1/29/21)

Here, Paloma challenges the common assumption about mothers' authoritative, hierarchical roles and forms of labor in supporting their children's education (Bruhn, 2023; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020).

While emphasizing agency and autonomy for her children, Paloma expressed being committed to remaining in close physical proximity to her daughter due to the unprecedented challenges created by online instruction for a DLBE program. For instance, she mentioned that learning Spanish on the screen was more difficult for her daughter because "the teachers would switch between screens and slides before Lucia had a chance to grasp the content" (Interview, 1/29/21). She believed that the large class size of over 30 students, each displayed through a small, square screen on Zoom, made it more difficult for all students to receive adequate attention from the teachers. During the year-long online class observations, Yalda noted that class size had become a grave issue because the English and Spanish teachers' homeroom classes were combined for 3 weeks while the English language teacher recovered from the COVID-19 virus (Classroom Field Notes, 1/15/21, 1/29/21). Yalda reported that there was disorganization within instruction and confusion among students during this time:

> Today seemed a bit disorganized; since the group was split up halfway through, there wasn't really any break time, so the kids got restless. I wonder why Ms. Martínez (the designated Spanish teacher) was teaching in English today? She did a good job of sticking to the primary language, as she always does, but I feel there was considerably less translation of instructions into Spanish than there is when she teaches primarily in Spanish. Wondering if the switch of teacher language is confusing for them? (Post-Observation Memo, 1/15/21)

Two weeks later, when Mrs. Trejo was still absent due to the COVID-19 virus, Yalda observed attrition in children's attendance: "There seems to be a lot of absentees. I wonder if that has to do with Ms. Trejo's continued absence?" (Classroom Field Notes, 1/29/21).

In response to the staffing issues and class disarray, Paloma frequently spent most of the school day with her daughter and her older children to ensure that they concentrated on their learning and received targeted, well-informed feedback from her (Post-Observation Memo, 1/29/21). During the interview, Paloma claimed that she frequently leveraged her co-teacher position to advocate for Lucia by "asking teachers to repeat content when Lucia did not understand it, or making sure she was present to help Lucia follow the lessons" (Interview, 1/29/21).

Nevertheless, Paloma perceived her co-teacher role as limited since the classroom teachers held the authority to decide on the nature and scheduling of instruction. Paloma stated that she would have configured the group structure differently to ensure every child's success:

> Most of the things teachers do, they just tell us, "Let's do this." If you say, "Teacher who—" Some people do [speak up], they do hear [us], but it's not like they tell you, "We're going to

> take a vote to do."[3] As I tell you right now that one of the teachers got sick, a single teacher lasted more than three weeks with two classes, which have about 20 children. Really if they had asked for their opinion, maybe we would have made different schedules so that all the children had attention. (Interview, 1/29/21)

In her commentary, Paloma identified promising efforts from her daughter's teacher regarding efforts to engage parents in decision-making processes. This was evident across several classrooms where teachers invited parents for class activities and referred to these parents as "co-teachers." Other mothers in these classrooms, most of whom were from racially minoritized groups, expressed that they were generally satisfied with the teachers' family engagement approach while acknowledging the challenges and limitations of online schooling (Kaveh & Buckband, 2024). However, Paloma was the only parent who explicitly problematized the nature of parent-teacher partnerships, emphasizing the need to avoid essentializing racially minoritized parents' perspectives on DLBE programs.

Discussion and Implications

The counter-stories demonstrate how two Latina immigrant mothers negotiated and resisted several fallacies within family engagement approaches placed upon Latinx families in DLBE programs. Paloma and Lupe leveraged various capitals within community cultural wealth to help their children survive and cultivate linguistically expansive learning experiences during dual language pandemic schooling. Paloma's and Lupe's multifaceted and distinctive roles as educational partners, mothers, and caregivers for their children challenged static labels and false dichotomies enforced upon racially minoritized families in schools, such as being engaged versus unengaged, satisfied versus unsatisfied, and cooperative versus difficult. Additionally, Lupe's and Paloma's care and support for their children's learning and well-being in their DLBE programs contested normalized deficit views of Latinx and other racially minoritized families possessing deficient knowledges, communicative practices, and values that hinder their children's development and education (Fernández & López, 2017; Flores & García, 2017). In this section, we further unpack these findings in response to the study's research questions.

In response to Research Question 1, Paloma and Lupe contested deficit and essentialized orientations toward Latinx family engagement in schools by pointing out the limitations behind their designation as "engaged/involved," demonstrating shared yet divergent heritage and caretaking practices, and committing to their children's flourishing beyond academic, standardized metrics and expectations in schools. For instance, Lupe noted that the parent forums and school leadership spaces were mostly composed of White and socioeconomically advantaged families. Utilizing the school-naming initiative as an example, Lupe explained how she was often invited to participate but not lead parent forums and school leadership spaces, even though she was an official staff member. Paloma noted that although she appreciated her designation as a co-teacher, she believed that this label did not guarantee equitable decision-making power in her child's education; instead, it overlooked her additional responsibilities as a parent. As Olivos and Lucero (2018) warned, well-intentioned educators' and researchers' overestimation of Latinx parents' level of contentment with the status quo may help silence parents' concerns and overlook their intricate hopes and dreams for their children. As such, this study suggests that asset-based labels and compliance behaviors do not necessarily indicate that Latinx parents directly influence the leadership, programming, teaching, and learning in DLBE programs. In contrast, this study, along with that of Olivos and Lucero (2018), demonstrates

[3] The first portion of this quote appears in Kaveh & Buckband's (2024) article about the DLBE teachers' practices.

the continual need for researchers, educators, and leaders to interrogate and examine how the superficial usage of asset-based terms and overestimation of parental satisfaction may reify the exclusion and oppression of Latinx families in DLBE education, especially in states grappling with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Similar to previous research (Fernández & López, 2017; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Olivos, 2006), this study ruptures deficit orientations toward the Latinx families' care work and educational support by demonstrating Lupe's and Paloma's similar yet heterogenic, sophisticated forms of heritage and communicative practices within their arduous efforts to sustain their children's learning and well-being. This study also expands the existing literature by illustrating how parents' views shift based on their experiences and perceptions of children's interests in a particular context at a given time. For instance, Paloma viewed language mixing as a possible limitation for her child's acquisition of standardized language forms, which are often positioned as possible conduits for social and material advancement. However, she used languages fluidly to support her daughters' bilingualism, family and heritage relationships, and wellness at home. Thus, researchers, educators, and leaders must welcome expansive orientations to language that are entangled with the relationships, embodied and affective reactions, and identifications of Latinx families and the historical and contemporary conditions and processes that influence them (Kramsch, 2009). As part of these aims, Latinx families must be considered as agentive sociopolitical and historical actors, and their orientations toward languages must be regarded as *praxes*, which transform as living entities based on their contexts, audiences, and evolving purposes (Kaveh, 2023).

Lupe noted how the DLBE program implied standardized, European-based varieties of English and Spanish as a prerequisite for families to wield decision-making power and influence in school leadership groups, visioning processes, and programming decisions. Although Guatemalan Spanish varieties—those connected with the dominant Latinx group at the DLBE program—were sometimes present in school events and initiatives, Lupe noted that there were minimal efforts to welcome other Spanish varieties from other Latin American lineages. Such findings echo those of previous studies that advocate for the contestation of language and ethnoracial homogeneity that permeate the schooling experiences of Latinx families in DLBE programs (Chaparro, 2019; Segel et al., 2024). Additionally, this study suggests that this reporting on Latinx families in DLBE programs can occur without presenting the experiences, perspectives, and understandings of White families as essential precursors and bases of comparison.

Our findings highlight that Latinx families represent a range of knowledge traditions, forms of expression, identifications, and access to wealth and resources based on their multi-faceted responses to material and social ramifications from societal inequities. For instance, Lupe and Paloma shared similar identifications as Latinas/Hispanas from Latin American nations who live in states with anti-immigrant and anti-bilingual policy histories. However, they had varied responses across different modalities for supporting their children's language and content learning while prioritizing their children's socioemotional and physical wellness in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic's physical, social, and financial ramifications heightened Latina immigrant mothers' strategic approaches to sustaining their children's health and physical safety (Bruhn, 2023). For instance, Lupe's counter-story notes how mothers were attentive to their children's supply and quality of facemasks as an added, essential school and educational resource. In relation, it is crucial for researchers and other DLBE program partners to present Latinx families' agentive attempts to contest static orientations to Latinx identity without the dependency of the White gaze (Alvarado, 2024a). This study shows that such efforts to contest deficit orientations to Latinx family identity should challenge bounded conceptualizations of Latinx family engagement in DLBE programs that relegate the purpose and function of family engagement to merely supporting children's success in standardized metrics for biliteracy and content learning.

Regarding Research Question 2, Lupe and Paloma employed various capitals of community cultural wealth as they supported their children's well-being and learning while negotiating the social, physical, and financial constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Lupe's and Paloma's narratives highlighted their varied yet enduring aspirational capitals for their children. Lupe prioritized her children's health, safety, and well-being and questioned the overemphasis on standardized language learning in her DLBE program. Paloma was focused on her children's independence, academic success, and bilingual development. While she was present during her children's remote schooling and instruction, Paloma wanted her daughter and the rest of her children to engage in the tensions and transformative realizations inherent to the learning process. Additionally, Paloma desired that her children have access to standardized bilingual proficiency to gain potential social and material benefits, although she embraced her child's use of Spanish at home to sustain family and heritage connections.

Lupe's and Paloma's linguistic capital was integral to supporting their children in their respective DLBE programs. Since Paloma's children participated in online learning, she leveraged her language repertoire to communicate with the bilingual teachers and support her children's bilingualism and home and school routines, as they were interwoven during the pandemic. Paloma's language use at home was driven by her language beliefs and goals for her children's linguistic, academic, and socioeconomic advancement. Lupe's employment at the DLBE program was enabled by her linguistic and social capital because of her relationship with the principal, who needed Spanish-speaking staff due to limited, state-wide bilingual teacher recruitment initiatives (Alvarado & Proctor, 2023). Upon being hired, Lupe leveraged her dynamic bilingualism to support classroom and school-wide activities and assist teachers with Spanish literacy instruction across grade levels. Additionally, Lupe's linguistic capital helped her act as a liaison for substitute teachers to support them with classroom management, as well as language and content instruction across modalities. These findings extend previous literature on Latina motherwork in U.S. schools by highlighting how Latina mothers supported other children and parents, along with their own children, in DLBE programs (Ek et al., 2013; Flores, 2022). Lupe's consistent communication with several mothers about their children's health, safety, and academics during the school day echoes Collins's (2000) notion of *othermothers*, establishing that motherwork is often a communal practice and a collective form of survival.

Lastly, the two mothers' engagement with their children's schooling and their continual advocacy and care work were facilitated by their navigational and resistant capitals. Lupe was hired by the principal as a school staff member, and Paloma was designated as a co-teacher throughout online schooling. These roles heightened the mothers' exposure to their children's classrooms, enabling them to observe and gauge their children's schooling more deeply than in previous years. In fact, the focal Latina immigrant mothers provided nuanced critiques and recommendations for promoting culturally and linguistically expansive learning experiences and wellness-centered programming across digital and place-based mediums for DLBE education. For instance, Paloma explained how her daughter, Lucia, had difficulty learning Spanish because her teachers used Spanish and English fluidly while switching between different screens and PowerPoint slides on Zoom. This issue became more prevalent as the Zoom class size doubled due to teacher illnesses and absences. Meanwhile, in the context of hybrid instruction, Lupe recommended that DLBE teachers incorporate community walks and shared multimedia resources for possible movement breaks throughout the school day. With these findings, this study extends Bruhn's (2023) and Delgado's (2022) claims about Latina immigrant mothers' worries and dissatisfaction with remote learning by highlighting the specific observations of these mothers regarding the nature of multimodal instruction and its relation with language learning. Further, this study highlights how Latina immigrant mothers, such as Lupe, may proactively model

activities and present neighborhood resources to school staff as part of their attempts to encourage the holistic wellness of their children throughout the school day.

Implications

The hardships and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic are a portal (Roy, 2021) for educational leaders to reimagine how to critically attune and equitably partner with families beyond pre-pandemic configurations. Lupe's and Paloma's experiences highlight a need for continuous, reflexive dialogues between educators and families about their different beliefs and priorities for children's learning, language, and well-being. Educators and researchers should reflect upon the intersectional, power-laden language decisions in multilingual children's learning and ask themselves, Who makes key decisions? Whose interests are being served? and How are decision-makers positioned based on intersectional forms of oppression? (Kaveh, 2023). Specifically, teachers can reflect on these questions and their instructional practices through a *cyclical praxis of critical consciousness*, which is composed by the following elements: historicizing communities and themselves, practicing critical listening, embracing discomfort, interrogating power, affirming identities, providing accompaniment, and translanguaging (Dorner et al., 2022).

Expanding this critical reflection to family engagement, educators must reframe family engagement as a process beyond schools, disrupt hierarchical expertise that favors educators over parents in guiding children's learning, and embrace multiply-minoritized families' histories, forms of expression, and traditions. Embracing families' histories should also entail understanding racially minoritized families' lived hardships, including a global pandemic, evolving socioeconomic conditions, immigration policies, and state language policies. This will enable critically conscious pedagogy that is responsive to those realities to be enacted. Part of these efforts also include dialogue with children as language policymakers who negotiate expectations and roles within schools and families (Kaveh & Buckband, 2024). Such efforts would extend Ladson-Billings's (2021b) recommendations to leverage the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to re-set education and foster culturally expansive, liberatory forms of learning that aim to catalyze and join broader movements in neighborhoods and other public spheres dedicated to social transformation and political education.

On a broader institutional level, school administrators must take multifaceted approaches to ensure that Latina immigrant mothers, along with other multiply-minoritized parents/caregivers, have considerable influence over school programming, improvement, and visioning. Administrators must take an asset-based stance by assuming that multiply-minoritized parents/caregivers, like Paloma and Lupe, are already supporting the education and development of their children, irrespective of the modality or how often they physically engage with schools. Consistent with claims from prior literature (Green, 2017; Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014) about school administrators' guiding the implementation of school mission and vision, the focal mothers, Paloma and Lupe, were positioned as needing to be *pulled into* (Rodela & Bertrand, 2021) pre-established priorities and routines for family engagement and school improvement. Indeed, family engagement and school improvement structures in the focal DLBE programs were often informed by the priorities, knowledge forms, and visions of DLBE school leadership and staff, as well as White upper- and middle-class families. In response, school administrators and staff in DLBE programs should advocate for *collective school visioning*, in which both its content and process address various matrices of oppression (e.g., race, class, language) that impact the education, well-being, and priorities of families.

This visioning would be an inclusive process with the entire DLBE school community to develop a vision of collective responsibility for the educational success, health, and safety of each student, with the knowledge, heritage, and language traditions and priorities of Latinx and multiply-

minoritized groups guiding the process (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014; Rodela & Bertrand, 2021). Furthermore, the DLBE school community, especially White families and DLBE school staff, would consistently engage in forums where they collectively study, reflect, and address dominant, problematic narratives they promote about Latinx and other multiply-minoritized groups. These types of forums would be part of DLBE programming that explicitly works to contest the essentialization of Latinx heritage practices, knowledge traditions, and communicative practices, acknowledging their temporal, malleable, and contextually-dependent nature.

As critical entry points into collective visioning, DLBE school leaders may leverage Green's (2017) *community-based audits* to learn from and listen to parents and community leaders and evaluate current participation spaces and structures. Through this process, DLBE school leaders would invite Latina immigrant mothers, like Paloma and Lupe, to serve on school and community leadership teams, who would then spearhead the formation of working agreements and communication norms necessary for monitoring and ensuring that racially minoritized families have tangible influence in collective visioning processes. They would be supported in their efforts to leverage resources and opportunities to further develop desired leadership skills and pursue interests, irrespective of whether such pursuits support children's acquisition of standardized academic metrics. Therefore, Latina immigrant mothers, like Paloma and Lupe, would be actively spearheading initiatives that aim to reimagine DLBE schooling and learning in response to realizations, experiences, and dilemmas faced by them and the entire school community during the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing political and socioeconomic disparities. This process would not be labor exploitative but mutually beneficial for Latina immigrant mothers, as they are holistically supported by other DLBE program members in their individual dreams, aspirations, and well-being.

Conclusion

This study reported how two Latina immigrant mothers contested and reimagined school-based and -led forms of family-DLBE program relations within states with anti-bilingual and anti-immigrant policy histories. While the focal mothers were often welcomed by DLBE staff members and educators, the mothers' priorities and goals were often in tension with the institution of schooling's control over their children's learning and well-being. This study serves as a cautionary tale for educational programs that position themselves as inherently linguistically and culturally expansive settings. Even in contexts where educational leaders intend to sustain families' community cultural wealth, parents may continue to be silenced and pressured to conform to the goals, practices, and routines in schools. To contest the social and material inequities that impact the everyday lives of families within and outside schools, we argue that educators and educational researchers must critically listen to families, especially those who are multiply-minoritized; design reforms that encourage multiply-minoritized parents' leadership and influence within school governance; elevate and sustain knowledge forms and language traditions as crucial levers for catalyzing transformative learning and relationship-building; and reconfigure educational institutions as public neighborhood entities dedicated to broader community mobilization efforts centered on social transformation and political and emancipatory forms of learning.

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