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Interrogating Racialized Scripts: Parents and Students Organized for Leading Educational Justice

Stefanie Iona Gurulé
University of Denver

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Abstract

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by

Stefanie I. Gurulé

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Advisor: Kristina Hesbol, Ph.D.

Author: Stefanie I. Gurulé
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This qualitative critical case study portraiture examines several racialized scripts found in family engagement, educational leadership, and social justice literature regarding under-resourced parents and students of color as leaders for educational justice. These scripts, or dominant narratives, discuss racially-minoritized parents and students as deficient in character and culture. They also deem that educational leadership for social justice is too complex an issue for these parents and students to have any positive effect. Therefore, they are viewed in the literature as being only passively active in their own education. Analyzing a successful and authentic parent and student activist organization that focused on educational justice through a dynamic methodological process called critical case study portraiture, this study asks how these parents and students interrogate such scripts. This study finds that through a process of reflection and action, under-resourced parents and students of color interrogated and countered each of these scripts through their leadership. This study includes a conceptual model called the Vassilaros critical leadership model that combines elements of community cultural wealth, critical race theory/Latinx critical theory, and social justice praxis as operationalized through collective transformative agency. This study suggests that parents and students are powerful actors in the fight to attain educational justice and recommends that practice, policy, and further research should view them as educational leaders who should be on the front lines of the war for equity and justice in education.

Acknowledgements

As you set out for Ithaka hope your road is a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery. Laistrygonians, Cyclops, angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them: You'll never find things like that on your way as long as you keep your thoughts raised high, as long as a rare excitement stirs your spirit and your body. Laistrygonians, Cyclops, angry Poseidon—you won't encounter them unless you bring them along inside your soul, unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

-- C.P. Cavafy, "Ithaka"

It has been a long journey where, unfortunately, Laistrygonians, Cyclops, and angry Poseidon got the best of me along the way. But where there were monsters there were also angels guiding me along, patiently and lovingly keeping me on route. I cannot thank each of them enough, and without any one of them I would have been lost and never made my way. This dissertation has been a lifetime in the making and I am overjoyed to send it finally into the world.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

  Maria emerged from the darkened halls of West High School into a bright and

clear spring morning. Though it was late March in Denver, she found that she only

needed a light jacket, which she left open over her purple dress. The wind blew lightly,

and Maria felt the cool air on her face. Though she was surrounded by other students, it

was not the end of the day. School was still in session. She and 150 other Chicanx and

African-American West High School students had decided to organize themselves and

walk out of school. Getting caught up in the excitement of the walkout, she almost forgot

the fear that initially kept her frozen in her seat. It took some time—almost half the

class—before she finally found the courage to stand up and walk slowly from the back of

her English class to the solid wooden door in the front of the room. Feeling like she was

walking in slow motion, she briefly remembered the intrigue on the other students' faces

and the surprise and anger in her teacher's voice when he said, "What are you doing

Maria? Sit down!" His voice seemingly echoed down the hallway as she rushed through

the school.

  Now, almost skipping down the wide, white steps outside of West High she was

immersed in sunlight as she joined the laughing, smiling faces of her fellow students and

friends. The loud chanting of students filled her with a sense of worth and community.

"We are really doing this!" she thought to herself.

"Education not racism!" she heard coming loudly from the crowd.

Waking proudly, her friend Carlos held above his head a large sign that read in thick black letters, "We Demand Better Schools!"

A girl behind her yelled "Chicano power!"

Trumpeted from a bullhorn, she heard a man's voice in between the chants of students. She could not see the owner of the voice over the heads of students and protest signs. Standing at only four feet, nine inches, she was too short to get a better vantage point in the crowd. The voice went in and out as she continued marching.

Walking with the other students to Sunken Garden, a neighborhood park across the street from the school, she suddenly felt the surge of the crowd move violently against her. She tried to stay on her feet, but she fell hard to the ground. Before she could get back up, she heard the chanting of the crowd turn to screams. She could not see what was going on. The crowd seemed to push in around her. Something was happening! And Maria was scared. A student screamed "Police!" and she felt her eyes begin to sting. Coughing and crying, she wanted to run, but could not, and did not know which way to go. (Inspired by Denver Commission of Community Relations, 1969).

The West High School Student Walkout of 1969. Though centered in the west side of Denver, the Walkout ignited four days of protests and civil disobedience all over the city, including the walkout of Denver's Manual, East, and Lincoln High School students in subsequent days. Students were joined by activists from the Crusade for Justice, who, along with their leader Rodolpho "Corky" Gonzales, helped organize the

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protests. Though the Walkout was meant to be peaceful, protesting students were met with police in riot gear who maced and beat the protesters. In retaliation, the students fought back by throwing bottles and rocks at the officers (Denver Commission of Community Relations, 1969). 25 students, community members and activists were arrested during the upheaval. Gonzales told the students, "We just talk about revolution. But you act it by facing the shotguns, billies, gas, and mace. You are the real revolutionaries" (Munoz, 2013, p. 11). The Walkout introduced *El Movimiento*, or the Chicano movement, to Denver.

So far left to go. Students initially walked out because of Denver Public Schools' (DPS) refusal to dismiss or discipline a teacher who would go on racist rants against Mexican-American students. According to students, this teacher taunted Mexican-American students by saying, "All Mexicans are stupid because their parents are stupid," and, "If you eat Mexican food you'll look like a Mexican" (Rocky Mountain PBS, 2010). Even after the protest, DPS only voluntarily transferred the teacher to another school (Rocky Mountain PBS, 2014). During the Walkout, students delivered a list of demands to the superintendent of DPS. "They sought diversity among district faculty and in curriculum; additional cultural training for teachers; outright dismissal of racist teachers; and bilingual study options within the school system" (Kosena, 2009, para. 4).

Though DPS has progressed toward this list of demands since 1969, the elusive goal of delivering culturally responsive, asset-based, equitable education has not been met (Kosena, 2009). These disparities can still be felt in the lack of diversity in the teaching staff, in the persistent segregation of schools, in the chasms of achievement, and in who gets suspended. Though approximately 77% of students in DPS are of color, 73%

of teachers in the district are white (Asmar, 2017). In 2017, DPS was recognized by the Colorado Children's Campaign as the most "racially divided district in the state" (Whaley, 2017, para. 4). In their study they found 71% of white students in Denver attend high-performing schools, while only 45% of racially-minoritized students do. This segregation is clear in schools only a few miles apart. For example, high-performing Steele Elementary has a white student enrollment of 83%, while just two miles away, low-performing Valverde Elementary has a white enrollment of only 5% (Whaley, 2017). This trend is similar when disaggregating both achievement data and behavioral data as well. While white students in the district do better than the average Colorado student on standardized tests, Denver's students of color do significantly worse (Asmar, 2018). Children of color in DPS are also disproportionately suspended and referred to law enforcement. A report by Padres y Jóvenes Unidos found that students of color are 3.1 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students (Asmar, 2016). To many, El Movimiento is still alive because *La Raza* (Chicanx and Latinx people) and other people of color continue to struggle and DPS has not delivered on the equitable education it has promised since 1969 (Rocky Mountain PBS, 2014).

DPS is not unique in its struggles for equity and the debt it owes its community. School districts all over the United States desperately seek ways to lead for social justice for the success of their students. One student march in 1969, or even a movement, cannot erase the damage history has had on American educational structures. It is only through including parents and students in the solution as critical leaders that educators will finally cut free from their past and forge a new road that includes equitable education and social

justice for all communities and students, no matter their language, income level, skin color, disability, gender identification, or immigration status.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. Nearly three decades after Maria intentionally stepped from the stairs of West High School into El Movimiento, Maria and others like her found themselves organizing once again, only this time to protect their children and other racially-minoritized students from the actions of another racist educator. In 1992, parents who at that time organized officially under the name Padres Unidos, both protested and worked with DPS administration to remove an elementary-school principal who punished Spanish-speaking students more harshly than other students. This included forcing Spanish-speaking students to eat lunch on the floor of the cafeteria (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos**,** 2016).

After successfully organizing to expel this principal, Padres Unidos continued their work by officially filing suit with the United States Office of Civil Rights against DPS for actively discriminating against Latinx students. The district was found guilty of this discrimination in 1996 (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos**,** 2016). This discrimination case was decided twelve years after the US District Court had already found DPS in violation of the 1974 Equal Opportunities Act in their failure to educate English language learners (ELL) and two years after The Congress of Hispanic Educators (CHE) filed a motion that maintained DPS was in civil contempt for failing to implement the original 1984 court order (DPS was found in contempt of the court order in 1999) (Denver Public Schools, 2018). In response to this ruling, Padres Unidos helped to organize five thousand students to walk out of school and raised awareness in the community and elsewhere that not only

were ELL students being discriminated against, but students of color were generally treated inequitably within DPS (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016).

With this successful momentum, Padres Unidos broadened their sphere of influence from working solely with the district to developing relationships with what was formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (currently Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)) and the Denver Police Department (DPD) as they organized and fought for the return of a DPS high-school student who was arrested from school and deported in 1998. This led to better protections for undocumented students in DPS (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016). Padres Unidos furthered their support for Mexican immigrant students in 2001 by aiding in the development of Academia Ana Marie Sandoval, the first dual language/Montessori elementary school in DPS (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016).

With the start of the new millennium, students joined Padres Unidos' ranks. As youth took a leadership role in the reform of a failing middle school in 2000, and the development of the North High School student satisfaction survey in 2004, students became a major component of Padres Unidos. In response to this, Padres Unidos became Padres y Jóvenes Unidos (PJU) (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016).

The North High School study was designed, published, and presented to the district and the media by students. The survey report found that 93% of North High School students wanted to go to college, but very few were actually prepared. In the wake of this report, North High School was recreated with a college-prep focus. Students also took these results to the district in 2007 as they pushed for and won new graduation

requirements that worked to align DPS graduation standards with that of college entrance requirements (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016).

During this same time period, PJU turned its focus toward the school-to-prison pipeline. PJU found this pipeline replicating significantly in DPS where racially-minoritized students were being suspended, expelled, and referred to law enforcement at triple the rates their white counterparts were, and fueling a Colorado prison system filled disproportionately with under-resourced men and women of color (Asmar, 2016). In 2008, after six years of negotiating, PJU partnered with DPS to change their zero-tolerance behavior policy, from one where minor behavioral offenses by children of color were often dealt with using criminal referrals, to a policy that supported restorative justice as an alternative to suspension, expulsion, and police involvement. Continuing this work PJU successfully negotiated an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between DPS and DPD in 2013. This agreement established policies and protections for racially-minoritized students in the hope of ending student referrals to law enforcement, eliminating racial disparities in discipline in DPS, and limiting the role of police in schools. Both of these efforts won state and national recognition as both the Colorado legislature and other states around the country used the language in DPS' new discipline policy and in the IGA to draft their own disciplinary language for schools. PJU was recognized by Barack Obama's administration for their work in changing such policies nationally (Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, 2016).

Harnessing the spirit of El Movimiento and educated through their experiences in a racist educational system, PJU parents and students continue to fight for educational justice both in Denver and throughout the state of Colorado.

Statement of Problem

Educators, including leaders for social justice, hold attitudes and beliefs about under-resourced parents and students of color that exclude them from leadership in their own education. This exclusion is based on institutional racialized scripts that "are a blueprint for identities and actions for different roles within an educational organization" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 346). According to Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017), these scripts "explain how the unspoken dominant norms, roles, and expectations in schools shape individual behavior and interactions" (p. 344). These scripts include, but are not limited to, the following six assumptions found in the literature.

- *Only principals, superintendents, and others with positional power can be educational leaders working toward educational justice* (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018). In their search of educational social justice literature, these scholars find there is very little reference to either parents or students in leadership roles. The extant literature focuses almost exclusively on principals, superintendents, and teachers. Racially-minoritized students or parents are not considered by researchers as "agents with valuable viewpoints" (p. 16).

- *Racially-minoritized parents and students, due to deficiencies in character, culture, and community, do not care about education.* Throughout the literature on parent and family engagement, under-resourced parents and students of color are viewed by educators as lacking dominant capital required to engage successfully with the school, and therefore not valuing education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017) find that institutional scripts are plagued with notions of deficiencies. African-

American parents are typically seen as the "problem parent" (p. 349) due to their seemingly aggressive stance and overt distrust of educators. In contrast, Latinx parents are labeled as "lazy" (p. 349) based on the assumption that they never show up to parent-teacher conferences or are not in regular communication with the school. In addition, students of color are assumed to come from "bad neighborhoods" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 29) and have irresponsible parents. Due to these assumptions of deficiency, students are viewed by many educators to be unable to meet the standards of schooling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

- *To develop educational expertise an educational leader must hold a college degree* (Nygreen, 2016; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017). Nygreen (2016) finds that in the experience of the parent group Alianza educational knowledge was assumed to be the domain of school officials with college degrees. In response to this assumption, parents organized together to renegotiate "whose knowledge counts in decisions about educating Latina/o immigrant children" (p. 210). Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017) observe that acknowledging and valuing parent knowledge as educational expertise allowed parents and students of color to work together successfully and become leaders in developing district curriculum.

- *Leadership for educational and social justice is a lonely and stressful role for educators who attempt such change* (Theoharis, 2007). In his research on social justice principals, Theoharis (2007) references the formidable institutional resistance these positional leaders experienced when attempting

to disrupt structural inequities. Leadership for social justice was a "gritty experience" (p. 249) that led some leaders to even "turn to alcohol…[as] an escape" (p. 248). Recognizing this incredible pressure, Marshall and Oliva (2010) warn,

> Leaders cannot make social justice happen by their passion and will alone. The huge shifts in cultural understandings and societal and school expectations will happen only with shared values, coalitions, networking, and mutual support that comes with the power of enlarging groups of people in social justice movements, which results in the building of societal capital, and, eventually political power. (p. 14)

Though debilitating stress is indeed the reality for many principals in their exceptional push for educational justice, it may not have to be that way with the aid of other social justice allies such as empowered parents and students. Other than observing that principals "reached out to the community and marginalized families" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 236), racially-minoritized parents and students are not discussed as either being supportive or resistant to the principals' leadership.

- *A "good" parent of color is one who "defers to educators and places unquestioned faith in their authority"* (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 349). This is a script frequently seen throughout the literature. For example, Ishimaru (2014a) finds that "when parents question educational practices, advocate for change, or otherwise do not conform to educator's expectations of passive support for the school agenda, they may be framed as obstacles to their children's success" (p. 191). Lareau and Horvat (1999) similarly discover "this display of parental concern and involvement was considered

unacceptable and 'destructive' by the educators" (p. 43). And McGinn-Luet

(2017) argues, "Because the parents' involvement took unconventional forms

the parents were viewed as 'unruly.' In that these actions violated 'discourses

of "proper" parenting'" (p. 678). Because these parents were viewed by

educators as non-compliant, their voices were purposefully excluded.

- *Leadership is too much of a burden on parents and students* (Fine, 1993;

  Hartney, 2014; McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). Fine (1993) contends in this

  comparative case study that programs designed to develop parent

  empowerment "change over time from what was called 'empowerment' into

  what became crisis intervention" (p. 685). She argues that under-resourced

  parents of color are required by their situations to use their limited resources

  primarily for survival and therefore are often unable to divert their energies to

  leadership. Accordingly, she maintains that parents cannot and should not be

  responsible for changing schools. This script is also supported by Hartney

  (2014), who warns, "Parents (especially low-income parents) often lack the

  resources such as time, money, and civic skills that are necessary to organize

  themselves and wage an effective lobbying campaign," and that, "these

  barriers often preclude low-income parents from becoming politically active"

  (p. 5). McGuinn and Kelly (2012) find,

    The poor tend to have lower levels of education and engage less in all
    types of political activity, including voting, communicating with elected
    officials, attending public meetings, joining interest groups, and
    contributing to campaigns. (p. 4)

These racialized scripts are only a few of the "hegemonic" (Giroux, 1996, p. 2) narratives either explicitly or implicitly held by educators about the ability of organized parents and students to become leaders of social justice in their own education.

Research Question

Based on the problem of investigation, the research question is, "How do the experiences of under-resourced parents and students of color, organized for educational justice, interrogate the institutional racialized scripts reproduced within educational structures regarding educational leadership for social justice?"

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to engage in a social justice project that both actively empowers under-resourced parents and students of color, while also inquiring how organizing allows them to challenge hegemonic scripts developed and played out by educators regarding leadership for educational justice. Using social justice praxis, this research is designed to interrogate these institutional racialized scripts or "stock stereotypes" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.28), and disrupt the inequitable educational structures built upon them. Through this interrogation and disruption, parents and students may be able to demonstrate their own leadership.

As dynamic leaders, allied with positional educational leaders, parents and students can mature into tremendous forces for social justice in both their communities and their schools. By recasting their portraits in authentic voices, parents and students may become heroes and heroines in their own stories. These interrogations, along with this study's new empowering research process of *critical case study portraiture* (Gurulé, 2019), can help to empower parents and students to claim their place as educational

leaders for social justice, allowing them to both support positional leaders and stand in equal position on the front lines of the war for equity and justice in education.

For the purpose of this research, parent and student are defined by the following.

- Parent is defined as an adult who is responsible or has been responsible for the well-being of a student. Though family engagement literature replaces parent with family to recognize both the varied forms of modern families and the idea of whole home support (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; DeMatthews, Edwards & Rincones, 2016; Epstein, 2010), this research is using parent, not to narrow the definition of family, but to be able to refer to a specific adult (no matter who that adult is) who parents in many forms and is specifically responsible for the well-being of a student.

- Student is defined as a young person who is currently attending an elementary, middle, or secondary school. This definition includes adults who became a member of a successful and authentic parent/student activist organization while still in school and youth who dropped out of school in the past five years.

Significance of the Study

Though she is a composite character inspired by original footage of the 1969 West High School Walkout, the portrait of Maria at the beginning of this chapter leaves many questions to be explored (Denver Commission of Community Relations, 1969). Maria is an example of how a student's leadership can shape the expectation for educational justice, however, the portrait is only a rough sketch of the thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and actions of a transformative leader. It does not privilege the reader to Maria's

historical context, future positionality, or her inevitable transformation. For instance, how or why did Maria decide to engage in the Walkout in the first place? Did her friends talk her into it? Was she one of the student leaders who originally approached the school administration and organized the Walkout? How did her family contribute to her beliefs? What were their thoughts about her participation, or the role they played in giving her the courage to leave her seat? How does Maria describe the empowerment process that occurred through her decision to participate and the politicization that led to and will continue following her involvement? Does she consider herself a Chicana? What does this identification mean for her future? How do Maria's thoughts, feelings, and actions interrogate stereotypes of the dominant culture? There are so many unanswered questions, yet the portrait of Maria in that single moment allows the reader to understand her courage, oppression, and fragility in the situation. She was vulnerable in her position, yet at the time she chose to find her courage in the collective leadership the Walkout created as it ignited a movement for educational justice in her school and community. The significance of this study is both in the rough sketch of her original portrait and in the detailed nuances of the critical portrait yet to be painted.

By combining elements of case study, critical race methodology, youth participatory action research, and critical evocative portraiture into a new research process called critical case study portraiture, this case study will be both an empowering and reflective process for its participants and a critical dialogue for its readers. Critical portraits, such as those to be created throughout this research, are significant in their liberatory benefits. By interrogating racialized scripts, parents and students may take a counter view. According to Delgado (1989), these anti-hegemonic stories can "lead to

healing, liberation, [and] mental health" (p. 2437) of those who are marginalized. They also "embolden the hearer, who may have had the same thoughts and experiences…but hesitated to give them voice" (p. 2437). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue these reflective counter-stories "give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance" (p. 37). They "can open new windows into the reality of those in the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position" (p. 36). Organized parents and students are role models. They represent what could be when a person of color engages in a journey of reflection, political consciousness, empowerment, collective transformative agency, and transformative resistance.

Beyond directly affecting both the storyteller and her/his peers, this research aims to influence those who both consciously and unconsciously believe in the institutional scripts. Delgado (1989) writes, "Most oppression…does not seem like oppression to those perpetrating it" (p. 2437). Counter-stories are able to describe points-of-view that many cannot, and often are not willing to see. They disrupt "comfortable dominant complacency" (p. 2438). According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), "They can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems" (p. 36). As recognized in the problem of research, it is not only educators with prejudice who are the target of this study, it is also liberal-minded principals, superintendents, teachers, and scholars who believe they are soldiers for social justice, yet have routinely excluded the leadership and denied the empowerment of those who they claim to fight for.

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In recognizing this research, educators and scholars will be forced to expand their view of who can be a transformative leader and exercise social justice praxis in schools. This new notion of transformative leadership will be important for educating teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members. Learning to recognize community cultural wealth, they will need to determine strategies to create a culture that both encourages and supports parents and students in their liberatory journey to become leaders for social justice. It will be necessary for positional leaders to learn how to facilitate collective empowering and reflective experiences for parents and students, while also learning to collaborate with such leaders. Finally, educators will need to understand the inequitable power relationship between themselves and parents and students, resulting in the need to learn new strategies to balance this power dynamic. These new understandings and strategies will need to be taught in both teacher and principal preparation programs and will require the focus of significant sustained professional development.

This study will encourage further research and address who needs to participate in additional studies in educational leadership. By both embracing and emboldening student and parent voices, this research will allow educational positional leaders, researchers, and legislators to reflect on their own understanding of leadership while engaging in the points-of-view of students and parents instead of principals and superintendents. This echoes the argument posed by Mansfield (2014) who writes that including parent and student voices "in leadership and research practice inherently operationalizes social justice practices that have potential to sensitize…as well as inform and strengthen social justice leadership and transformative learning spaces" (p. 393). Asking for more than

understanding, this study will critically argue for the inclusion of authentic parent and student voice in the local, state, and federal educational policy making process as well as contend that policy officially legitimating organized parent and student leadership also be created.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

      This chapter examines the literature relating to parent and student organizing. A burgeoning field, educational organizing finds its roots deep within the literature of parent involvement/family engagement, youth development, school reform, collective action/social movement, community activism, social capital, and just recently educational leadership. This chapter begins with a critique of the current state of educational inequity. Describing what racially-minoritized students and parents are up against will demonstrate their need for collective action and allow the academic argument for their organizing. Touching on what authentic forms of this activism look like and who organizes, this chapter continues with literature focused on the *how* of educational organizing, including how students and parents use their collective voice to create both relational and unilateral power for their communities. This chapter will close with a discussion of emergent literature and its findings that place parent and student organizing in the crosshairs of culturally relevant, socially just scholarship for educational leadership.

The World We Live In

      Social reproduction of educational inequities. Though Jim Crow (Vasquez Heilig & Holme, 2013) is no longer legal, and America has twice elected an African-American president into office, racism continues to exist, often in ways that seem to be more stubborn than before the civil rights movement. Dyrness (2009) describes America

to be in an "era of good intentions" (p. 37). This era is marked by implicit individual bias and systemic structural racism that continues to be reproduced by the country's "benevolence" (p. 37). Although seven decades removed from *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), America still struggles with segregated schools and educational, behavioral, and opportunity gaps that will not be bridged. This racism, unlike the obvious racism of the past, is in many ways more difficult to combat because the people who continue to be privileged by it refuse to acknowledge its existence or believe that it lives in some space other than the one they currently occupy (Dyrness, 2009).

Aiding in reproducing these inequalities is a way of thinking that haunts the hallways of schools across America. Deficit rationales "root educational disparities in deficiencies in the skills, knowledge, culture, support, values, or engagement of students, families, or communities rather than in systems of inequalities" (Ishimaru, 2014a, p. 189). Like today's form of racism, deficit thinking may also be well intentioned, "it may show up as altruism under the guise of helping, or as pity embedded in a performance of compassion" (Nygreen, 2016, p. 207). Instilled in this method of thinking are the reasons educators give when they lower the academic standard for many of their students of color or write off under-resourced parents of color when they fail to show up for a parent-teacher conference. By believing that their student or their student's family is incapable of learning or even caring about the education process, keeps students from succeeding in school (Nygreen, 2016). Deficit thinking, in its subtle way, bars students from realizing their potential. It allows educators to remain secure in the knowledge that "these poor kids" will always need them (Arriaza, 2004; Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Delgado-Gaitan,

2012; Dyrness, 2009; Fennimore, 2017; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; McAlister, Mintrop, Chong & Renee, 2012; McGinn-Luet, 2017; Moreno & Valencia, 2011; Nygreen, 2016; Olivos, 2004; Paredes Scribner & Fernández, 2017; Valencia, 2011; Warren, 2005; Welton & Freelon, 2018; Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Garcia, 2007).

Educators, however, only reflect the racism of the wider community. Though exceptionally dangerous in the school house, American children of color experience racism in every aspect of life. In a time of cell phones and social media, the average American citizen can now, without much effort, document this new era of racism and its consequences for racially-minoritized youth. From police brutality to being arrested for asking to use the restroom in a coffee shop, youth of color (especially young men) are racially profiled and barred from public spaces daily. In their research on youth development and activism, O'Donoghue, Kirshner and McLaughlin (2002a) describe that the racially oppressive stereotype holding "black, young, and poor" men as "also to be criminal" could "trigger depression, hopelessness, and suicidal tendencies" (p. 31).

Though racism at the individual level is crude and grotesque, it is not the most formidable problem facing racially-minoritized parents and students. Racism becomes even more harmful when replicated at the systemic level, seeping into the foundations of classrooms, school board rooms, and legislative policies. Warren (2018) contends,

> Many Americans recognize racism only at the individual level, when a person intentionally says racist things. However, the racism at play in schools is systemic, involving not only racist ideas but also policies, practices and institutional arrangements that keep black and brown young people poor, uneducated, and criminalized. (p. xxi)

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The game is rigged. Parent involvement literature is replete with teachers and

administrators blaming parents for the failure of their children, when the picture that

illustrates their failure is bigger and much more ingrained in the social fabric of America

(Auerbach, 2007; Greene, 2013; Ishimaru, 2014a; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; McGinn-Luet,

2017; Moreno & Valencia, 2011; Olivos, 2004; Warren, 2018; Yosso, 2005). McGinn-

Luet (2017) finds that

> parents demonstrate navigational, aspirational, and familial capital as they find
> creative ways to interact with school staff outside of formally established venues,
> inspire their children to persist in school despite various obstacles, and commit to
> the well-being of their children beyond their immediate family. (p. 693)

Though this is outside of the normal school business hours of parent conferences and

PTA meetings, families in the most difficult of circumstances still find ways to support

their children. Moreno and Valencia (2011) detail this support in Latinx parents,

documenting that

> Chicano parental involvement is 'largely invisible,' based more on developing a
> child's integrity or moral upbringing using '*consejos*' (advice-giving narratives)
> and supervision, to be well mannered (*bien educado*), respect (*respeto*), and
> strong work ethic. (p. 203).

Under-resourced parents of color, like white middle-class parents, know their

involvement is important to the success of their children, and will do anything within

their power to support them. Jasis and Marriott (2010) recognize this quality, observing

> teachers' notions about parental involvement are narrow and are usually confined
> to parents attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at classroom
> activities, raising funds for the school, and helping with homework; these notions
> are often affected by the assumption that many minority parents lack the
> necessary skills to help their children with schoolwork. (p. 129)

Creating a new platform for family engagement, many researchers demand a total

pedagogical makeover of the traditional parent involvement research (Auerbach, 2007;

Greene, 2013; Ishimaru, 2014b; Moreno & Valencia, 2011). Greene (2013) explains,

> What matters most to families is often not visible to educators …therefore, it is
> important that educators understand more fully who parents are, what parents are
> already doing to support their children, and develop models of parent involvement
> that are reciprocal and collaborative. (p. 2)

Moreno and Valencia (2011) further assert that parental involvement must

"reconceptualize to include key factors such as…cultural practices among diverse

families" and "culturally driven micropersonal processes while simultaneously

recognizing and understanding the values, practices, and challenges that face diverse

families" (p. 205). Ishimaru (2014b) also insists that schools "move beyond traditional

forms of parent involvement" (p. 2) to family engagement and/or family empowerment

through educational organizing. This consistent movement in scholarship focusing on

family assets and strengths as opposed to deficiencies has led to theories prioritizing

funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth (Moll, Amanti, Neft, & Gonzalez,

1992; Yosso, 2005).

In their research, Lareau and Horvat (1999) document that "whiteness represents a

largely hidden cultural resource that facilitates white parents' compliance with the

standard of differential and positive parent involvement in school" (p. 49). They insist the

"rules" (p. 49) of the game are based on preferential individual capital. Looking at

parental involvement as a card game, the authors explain that "in addition to having a

different set of cards (capital), each player relies on a different set of skills (habitus), to

play the cards (activate the capital)" (p. 39). Schools only validate certain cards in the game and demand that other, non-preferred hands, are played with skill to win privilege.

McGinn-Luet (2017) recognizes that under-resourced families of color possess rich forms of funds of knowledge or often latent cultural, social and familial assets, but that "institutions may 'intentionally' misrecognize the funds of knowledge of students and families'" (p. 680). Additionally, in their three-year study on the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, Harry, Klingner and Hart (2005) find that "family strengths…were neither known or tapped by school personnel" (p. 101). They "interpret the findings in terms of the power of cultural capital and the discrepancy between the school's perceptions of such capital and the capital actually possessed by the families" (p. 101). Misrecognizing capital or refusing to count the unique strengths families bring to the table, vital to academic student support, puts under-resourced minority students at a disadvantage.

According to Martinez-Cosio (2010), these instances of misinterpretation develop into examples of inclusion and exclusion. Though parental advocacy is accepted from white middle-class parents, many researchers who document the parent involvement of under-resourced Latinx and African-American parents report that their individual advocacy is frequently dismissed by educators (Welton & Freelon, 2018). Ishimaru (2014a) notes, "When parents question educational practices, advocate for change, or otherwise do not conform to educators' expectations of passive support for the school agenda, they may be framed as obstacles to their children's success" (p. 191). Lareau and Horvat (1999) similarly find "this display of parental concern and involvement was

considered unacceptable and 'destructive' by the educators" (p. 43). And McGinn-Luet (2017) argues, "Because the parents' involvement took unconventional" or non-dominant "forms the parents were viewed as 'unruly'… these actions violated 'discourses of "proper" parenting'" (p. 678). Parents were thus excluded from the game. In her survey of educational organizing literature from 1995-2016, Fennimore (2017) also notices that individual "parent-led resistance that disrupts inequality tends to be excluded from the traditional hegemonic view that parent involvement should be focused on school-based support activities" (p. 161). It is not until educators begin to see value in parents' and students' resistance, beginning to understand that educational justice will only occur once educators, parents, and students join together in the fight for equity, will oppressive educational structures begin to crumble.

Conflicting expectations. Including parents, however, is often seen as a noble quest with potentially high costs. Becoming involved, parents find themselves in conflict with what educators say they desire, and what they believe. Though most educators will enthusiastically encourage parent involvement, secretly they fear the cost they may incur when parents become too involved (Malen, 1999). When educators are forced by district policy or state and federal laws to include parents, true colors often come through. Malen (1999) documents this in her research of school councils that include parents as voting members. She finds that "conflicts regarding the proper role of parents in policymaking, fears associated with 'intrusion' by 'outsiders' and anxieties about the school's ability to withstand scrutiny set the stage for a protective politics" (p. 210). She concludes that "across studies, professionals express appreciation for the support parents provide, on the

one hand, and, on the other, concerns about the time lost and the stress generated when parents are to be 'partners' in decision making" (p. 211). McGinn-Luet (2017) similarly finds that "parents are often portrayed as experts who possess key knowledge crucial for advocating for their children, but at the same time, parents are viewed as a nuisance when they become involved in ways that are not approved by school officials" (p. 678). Stone (1998) notices that "educators typically see parents not in the role of general champions for improved education but as sources of particular demands" (p. 263) Finally, McAlister et al. (2012) discuss the fact that "principals often view parents—especially parents of color and low-income parents—as an external pressure to minimize rather than partner" (p. 196). Parents, it seems, are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

   Power imbalance. In these relationships, power is balanced heavily in the favor of the educator. Though it can also be argued that there is a large power imbalance between teachers and administrators, when parents and students enter the equation educators fall heavily together as a single enforcer. Warren (2005) warns that "structural inequality not only sets the context for school-community collaboration; unequal power also structures relationships between school staff and parents within the school" (p. 137). When parents or students enter a room with an educator, no matter how ideologically aligned, liberally educated, or socially just that teacher or administrator thinks she is, power is noticed and expected in several ways: the educational inequalities symbolized by her diploma, the economic advantages represented by her clothes, her car sitting in the parking lot, and in the white-privilege in her voice. Though not all educators are white and middle-class, most are, and the privilege of the position itself resonates such power.

This power imbalance is described by Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) who notice

Mexican migrant parents "clearly recognized the power differential between themselves

as immigrant families and the symbolic omnipresence of school personnel" (p. 73).

Along with the singular power of their presence, teachers and principals also have

the power to control the agenda wherever parents and students are concerned. McAlister

et al. (2012) find that principals negotiate "the external environment with a mix of

buffering activities, which strategically limit external actors' access to core functions of

the organization, and bridging activities, which engage with external actors" (p. 198). In

studying a parent organization, Olivos (2004) details this "buffering" (McAlister et al.,

2012, p. 198) writing,

> Resistance on the part of administration became more apparent…[administration]
> would frequently ignore the parents, hoping they would somehow tire and go
> away…[administration] would try to convince the parents that their complaints
> were misguided-there were no problems at the school…[administrators] would
> provide them with false promises of an investigation. (p. 28)

Malen (1999) describes teacher-controlled agendas in school council meetings, recalling

how parents would "get stonewalled when they raise provocative issues" (p. 210). Having

lost all power to assert their ideas into the decision-making process, parents in the

councils fell into "familiar 'listen and learn' roles" and would quietly "ratify, or 'rubber-

stamp' decisions made elsewhere" (p. 210). Cline and Necochea (2001), detailing the

initial stages of a Latinx parent organizing group, describe a situation where the board of

education refused to listen to a father's testimony because he chose to give it in Spanish.

Educators have ways to censor and disrupt the ideas of parents or students in every

situation related to schooling. Though most will attempt to listen, these channels used to

exclude parents are always available.

An Argument for Organizing

  Equity, social justice, and school reform. By coming together, under-resourced

parents and students of color can change the narrative from being victims of a racist

society to becoming survivors and powerful negotiators for social change. Solórzano and

Delgado-Bernal (2001) argue:

> Resistance theories are different than social and cultural reproduction theories
> because the concept of resistance emphasizes that individuals are not simply acted
> on by structures. In contrast, resistance theories demonstrate how individuals
> negotiate and struggle with structures and create meaning of their own from these
> interactions. (p. 315)

This logic is clearly illustrated by Dyrness (2009), who, in her research of parent

organization Madres Unidos, finds that parents "transform their critique from something

hurtful and paralyzing into a catalyst for positive change at the school, by constructing a

bridge between their own experience, [and] that of other parents" (p. 40). Similarly, Jasis

(2013) observes:

> Parent activism has become a critical tool towards equity in education for
> historically underserved populations, particularly communities of color. In
> addition, parent and student activism through its many configurations has inspired
> wider struggles for social justice, at times developing a significant capacity to
> influence policy makers and to increase educational access and opportunities. (p.
> 114)

Organizing emboldens parents and students to become their own actors for educational

justice. Relying on each other, parents and students lead the way when positional leaders

do not.

  After interviewing forty-four educators, community organizers, parents, and

community members, Ishimaru (2014a) discovers that "organizing seeks to actively

engage parents and community members in advocating for themselves as the primary

means of influencing decision makers in the institutions that affect their lives" (p. 189).

By engaging in a self-empowering process, parents and students change not only

themselves, but the world around them. Winning concessions for both their own children

and the children of their community, organized parents and students find they can have a

powerful voice concerning the reform efforts in their schools. Researching a parent group

who filed a lawsuit against a district who, in their experience, was violating the law

behind *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974) and disregarding the rights of bilingual students, Arriaza

(2004) argues that "school reform issues…have greater chances of staying made when

the community actively participates as an empowered change agent" (p. 10). Warren

(2011) agrees with this assessment stating, "Urban school reform falters, in part, because

of the lack of an organized political constituency among the stakeholders with the most

direct interest in school improvement" (p. 484). Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) find

Latinx "parent involvement conceived within a context of increased equity, inclusion,

and activism seem[ed] to hold the potential to maximize a positive impact on their

children's education and life prospects" (p. 66). Through their organizing, parents and

students become active members in a reform effort most often dominated by educators

and politicians.

Power balance. Individual parents and students have little power in their

relational roles with educators. Together, however, and with the skill of decisive

collective action, parents and students can begin to tip the power imbalance in their favor.

Cline and Necochea (2001), in their appropriately titled research "*Basta Ya!*" detailing

the self-empowerment of a Latinx parent group in California, notice that parents needed

to organize because "the cultural abyss had grown too wide to be crossed using traditional methods" (p. 102). These researchers find "*caudillismo* (power)" to be a critical component in the resulting parent activism. In their point of view, for "poor and minority parents to have a voice, they need to get out of the prescribed realm of parent involvement and become politically active as they seek remedies to the injustices that are rampant within our schools" (p. 111). With power, parents and students can be heard and use their voice for social change.

Warren (2005) documents three different types of parent and student organizing, including "the service approach (community schools), the development approach (community sponsorship of new charter schools), and the organizing approach (school-community organizations)" (p. 133). He asserts that by using the organizing approach parents and students "no longer interact with teachers and principals as isolated individuals, a situation guaranteed to reinforce the power of professionals over parents of color. Rather, as an emerging collective body they stand a better chance to exert authentic leadership" (p. 165). In his research of several parent and student organizations over several years, including Warren (2005), Warren (2011), Warren and Mapp (2011), and Warren (2018), Warren concludes that "building power and transforming power relationships" are key to successfully organizing parents and students (Warren & Mapp, 2011, p. 207).

Through developing a broader, more balanced power base between themselves and educators, parents and students can make a difference for themselves and their community. Like Warren, McAlister et al. (2012) recognize that parents and students

"stand in a different relation to schools than parents engaged in individualistic forms of advocacy" (p. 197). Fabricant (2011) similarly illustrates this in the words of a parent organizer, who exclaims, "[I] can't get it done by myself with no power. I have to join up with other parents in the same situation to change things" (p. 39). Collectively parents and students demand to be treated as equals. Instead of seeing themselves as recipients, activism empowers them to become active participants in an education system they now have the power to change.

   Development of individual and community capital. Often, in creating change, it is not how loud a parent and student activist organization can be, but how much collective individual and community socio-cultural capital they can muster. In their seminal book *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passerson (1977) explain individual capital as something someone possesses or does not possess. In this theory capital is valuable in that it can be exchanged as social commodities (Rios-Aguilar, Marquez Kiyama, Gravitt & Moll, 2011). People who do not have the capital required in a particular social situation are considered to be poor in capital, and those that have, for example, grown up in white middle-class suburbia, are said to be rich in capital because they possess the correct type of capital for most public situations in American society. This is where deficit thinking is rooted. Educators view under-resourced students and parents of color to be poor in capital. They do not recognize non-dominant forms of capital to be resources.

   Several researchers disagree with Bourdieu and Passerson's (1977) view of winners and losers. They instead focus on asset-based paradigms that assume there is

inherent wealth in every family and community (Daddow, 2016; Delgado-Gatian, 2012; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti 2005; Lubienski, 2003; Marquez, 2010; Marquez Kiyama, 2011; Moll et al., 1992; Paredes Scribner & Fernández, 2018; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Yosso, 2005). They call on educators to not only recognize this capital, but to aid students and parents in activating such strengths in the classroom or within parent-educator collaborative activities.

One such theory is funds of knowledge. Moll et al. (1992) originally developed this concept in an ethnographic research project, where teachers and academics acted as co-researchers. During this study, teachers observed and learned about the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133) in the lives of their students and their families. They then used these newly discovered strengths to inform their instruction and connect with their students. The study's objective was not to examine the funds of knowledge per se, but to detect how teachers could act as anthropologists, who, after studying the lives of their students, could then use their findings to drive culturally-responsive instruction. Several scholars have used funds of knowledge as a way to understand racially-minoritized students' successes and difficulties inside school and in their transition to college (Daddow, 2016; Marquez Kiyama, 2010; Rios-Aguilar, 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Marquez Kiyama, 2018).

Similar to funds of knowledge is Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth. In this theory, Yosso (2005) defines capital as something that is possessed by a community, as well as by an individual. This framework recognizes that several "forms

of capital are nurtured" including "aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant" (p. 77) capital, which overlap and develop each other into a richer and denser capital than any one of them could be alone. In furthering this theory, Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) link community cultural wealth and parent/student organizing with the idea of "collective knowing" (p. 72). They define this term, originated in 1936 by Mannheim, as an interdependent community's collection of experiences that bind together to create the "fabric of the wider community" (p. 71) experience. In their view, parents and students organized together compound this collective knowing. Or as Yosso (2005) would have it, are rich in community capital.

Although the theories of Yosso (2005) and Moll et al. (1992) are inspiring, they are not how most literature interprets educational organizing. For the most part, the literature highlights social capital as the direct result of and asset to organizing. Viewed as a seminal source on the subject, Putnam (2000) defines social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 21). Observing this creation of social capital in his research on parent and student organizing, Warren (2011) finds that parents came together to support one another after attending school meetings where they felt "isolated from each other and impotent in dealing with the school administration" (p. 497). Beckett, Glass, and Moreno (2012) also observe developing social capital in a Latinx group who similarly created a "physical and dialogical space" that was "founded on trust and solidarity" where parents could "listen to and support one another" (p. 10). This

space was in contrast to the broader school community where parents said, "they could 'know' each other for 20 years and not even know one another's name" (p. 10).

By organizing, parents and students create social capital allowing them to develop a sense of togetherness and begin to use the strength of the group to work with administration. Ishimaru (2014b) finds that "schools with high organizing had greater structural social capital than schools with little organizing" (p. 2). As parents and students begin to rely on each other, they create a form of social support, as well as connect their individual networks to create a denser form of both individual and community social capital (Beckett et al., 2012; Coleman, 1990; Dijkstra & Peschar, 2003; Ginwright, 2007; Halstead & Deller, 2015; Ishimaru (2014b); Martinez-Cosio, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2005, 2011).

Viewed as the networking capital, social capital can also be thought of as the trusting capital. Social trust is connected to organizing because it is believed by many researchers to be its major biproduct. Stone, Henig, Jones, and Pierannunzi (2001) find that trust is imperative to civic capacity and social change. They write,

> The need for trust, solidarity, and vision among the participants becomes the key for any hope of success in achieving significant change in local schools, as families engage in a process in which enhanced feelings of interpersonal trust and reciprocity can lead to effective political engagement and policy. (p. 67)

Racism and the conflicting expectations parents and students receive from both society and schools, allows for an experience of distrust (Cline & Necochea, 2001). This is the reason Cline and Necochea (2001) refer to parents as having "la falta de confianza (lack of trust)" (p. 92) toward educators in their research. Organizing, however, allows for new

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experiences of trust, as parents and students are able to begin trusting one another and restoring power to their communities.

Finally, furthering the cause for social capital in his study on African-American youth, Ginwright (2007) develops what he calls "critical social capital" (p. 407).

> Rather than view social capital as perfunctory relationships and connections to resources, critical social capital in black poor communities must contend with fostering a critical consciousness, building a strong racial identity, and developing political optimism and expectations about community change" (p. 407).

In his view social capital is not only formed from people connecting to one another, but is created by the processes of personal transformation, political consciousness and hope developed when parents and students come together for critical collective participation.

Personal transformation and youth development. Organizing can create personal transformation in a way that no other activity can. By organizing, parents and students develop personal psychological empowerment, social trust, and aspirations of hope advanced by the former two (Zimmerman, 1992). In many accounts of parent and student organizing there is a story of positive personal change. In her research of Latinx parent activism in a small town in California, Delgado-Gaitan (2001) observes that "through community actions, parents and educators created their own road to empowerment" (p. 146). Additionally, in their research on lesbian parent activists, Jones and Voss (2007) maintain that "by organizing their communities, [parents] may create positive social change and impact their own emotional well-being and that of their families" (p. 77). Lopez (2003) observes that "by becoming immersed in organizing, parents experience a personal transformation and begin to think of themselves as leaders" (p. 3). Mediratta, Shah, and McCalister (2009) argue that "the experience of participating

in campaigns can profoundly impact individual member's perceptions of themselves, their skills, knowledge, and involvement in schools, communities, and family life" (p. 149). Finally, Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) find that parents, after organizing, developed an "emerging sense of agency" (p. 84). Based on this literature, it is clear that organizing can result in the positive personal transformation of involved parents and students (Beckett et al, 2012; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, 2004, 2012; Dyrness, 2009; Fennimore, 2017; Fuentes, 2012; Ishimaru, 2014a, 2014b; Jasis, 2013; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Jones & Voss, 2007; Lopez, 2003; Martinez-Cosio, 2010; McAlister et al., 2012; Mediratta et al., 2009; Nygreen, 2016; Olivos, 2004; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2005, 2011; Warren & Mapp, 2011).

In addition to the personal revolution advanced in parents and students through activism, several studies focus specifically on youth organizing and their affected development (Cicognani, Mazzoni, Albanesi & Zani, 2015; Kirshner, 2015; Lakin & Mahoney, 2006; Lewis-Charp, Cao Yu & Soukamneuth (2006); O'Donoghue, Kirshner & McLaughlin, 2002b; Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009; Yates & Youniss, 1998). Youth activism aids adolescents in the development of their identities, allows them to have greater perceived agency over their lives, promotes engagement in school and democratic processes, and creates psychological empowerment. Yates and Youniss (1998) discover that "retrospective studies indicate that activist experiences in youth can serve as landmark events or turning points that help define a sense of social responsibility and investment…[youth] came to perceive themselves as having agency to alter the course of history" (p. 497). In his comparative case study of two youth educational

organizations, Kirshner (2015) finds an "interdependent relationship between youths' political engagement, their development, and social health" (p. 4). Lakin and Mahoney (2006), Albanesi et al. (2015), O'Donoghue et al. (2002b), and Lewis-Charp et al., (2006) all discover that youth find activism and organizing as "empowering and promoting a sense of community" (Lakin & Mahoney, 2006, p. 513). These findings were also duplicated by Russell et al. (2009) in their study of high school Gay Student Alliance leaders in California.

Two models of youth development, the Adolescent Empowerment Cycle (AEC) and the Social Justice Youth Development Model (SJYD), both use student activism as the cornerstone for successful adolescent development (Chinman & Linney, 1998; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Both models suggest student activism and organizing are paramount to youths' psychosocial development, arguing that youth need to participate both collectively and critically to understand who they are in the world. These models support theories positing that student organizing and activism aid youths' development and transition to becoming civically empowered adults.

AEC specifically expands the work of Erik Erickson and his 1968 seminal work *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. Erickson found "political commitment" to be "a key aspect of identity formation in adolescence" (as cited in Yates & Youniss, 1998, p. 495). Using this admission in Erikson's work to develop an argument for the AEC, Chinman and Linney (1998) specifically utilize the identity crisis and formation aspect in Erickson's Identity vs. Role Confusion stage to inform their model. Also using theories of "rolelessness" (p. 399) and "social bonding development" (p. 399), AEC contends that youth experiment

with different roles in search of a "stable identity" (p. 399). Thus, through various

activities, such as activism, youth receive feedback to "obtain information about self-

efficacy, become bonded to positive institutions, and become empowered" (p. 399).

Ginwright and James (2002), Kirshner (2015), O'Donoghue et al. (2002a), and

O'Donoghue et al. (2002b), all refer to the SJYD. Developed by Ginwright and

Cammarota (2002), this ecological approach has five principles. Each principle is then

connected to practices and outcomes. The five principles are:

- analyzes power in social relationships (political education/development of

  sociopolitical awareness);

- makes identity central (development of pride of one's identity/build

  solidarity with others who share common struggles);

- promotes systematic social change (working to end social inequality/sense

  of life purpose);

- encourages collective action (community organizing/capacity to change

  personal, community, and social conditions); and

- embraces youth culture (celebrating youth culture/authentic youth

  engagement).

SJYD maintains that the culmination of these principles aids the advancement of youths'

positive psychological and social development.

Mutual accountability and parent experts. Change in public schools is fleeting.

Speeches are given, and goals are drafted, but the promises of district administration

rarely make it to the classroom (Warren, 2005). Warren (2005) cautions that "urban

schools will continue to fail their students when communities lack the power to demand accountability" (p. 137). Though test scores and teacher evaluations attempt to hold schools and teachers accountable, without creating a new form of mutual accountability provided through active and morally centered relationships with empowered parents and students, reforms have little chance of being sustained (Oaks & Rogers, 2006). Eventually teachers will retreat into their isolated classrooms, and schools will return to past routines (Warren, 2005). Warren (2011) recommends that parent and student organizations "work 'externally' to demand change and hold systems accountable as well as work 'internally' to collaborate with educators to strengthen the internal capacity of schools to improve" (p. 502). System change does not happen in isolated instances, but within an intentional culture of systemic, dynamically supported transformative relationships and leadership (Shields, 2013).

Ishimaru (2014a) finds that when parents organize for educational change "systemic goals" are designed and acted upon "within a culture of shared responsibility" (p. 190). In this mutually accountable relationship, educators are responsible for making the necessary policy and practice changes, while organized students and parents continue to provide important localized knowledge and commitment to ensuring that educators and schools continue their move toward equity and educational justice. Parents and students additionally hold up their end of the bargain by supporting one another in learning and becoming active, empowered participants in "their" education.

Hartney (2014), however, does not view accountability as mutual, but as basic political power. He suggests parents and students have the power to redress educational

systems at the ballot box if needed, and exercise "replacement power" (p. 5) by voting non-reform minded school board members out of office, replacing them with candidates more sympathetic to the concerns of parents and students. McGuinn and Kelly (2012) describe the exceptional power that some parents have by enforcing accountability through Parent Trigger laws. These laws allow parents to radically change failing schools by firing the principal and/or superintendent and turning the school into a charter, mayoral or state-run institution. These rights are available in California, Mississippi, Texas, Indiana, Louisiana, and Ohio (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). In these states, organized parents not only represent a collective voice but are a powerful political threat to under-performing educators.

This shift toward mutual accountability, opposed to political accountability, is only successful however, when educators begin to respect parents' organic knowledge. As parents shift the power balance, educators are able to see them as significant in both the school and in their children's education. In her investigation of the parent organization Alianza, Nygreen (2016) connects this newly-found role in the group's strategy to "shift the power relationship between specialized and community-based knowledge" (p. 209). For Alianza, "the parent organizing campaign was essentially about contesting, (re)defining, and asserting what and whose knowledge counts in decisions about educating Latina/o immigrant children" (p. 210). No longer were parents going to passively allow teachers to be the sole base of knowledge regarding their children. Their opinions and decisions about their students' education mattered too. Ishimaru (2014a) recognizes this phenomenon, reporting that by organizing, parents earned the role as

"experts on their children and communities" (p. 190). Additionally, in her research of a parent-community organization, Shirley (1997) finds that the school's relationship with the organization was transformed "from parent involvement to parent engagement" (p. 74). Jasis and Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) similarly recognize that parents' sense of efficacy, resulting from their activism, allowed "true family partnerships" to develop (p. 82). These researchers notice that as a result of this new partnership, teachers and administrators began to not only see parents as experts, but to also draw on their expertise. Instead of burdens to be dealt with, parents became resources to the school.

Civic capacity. Greater than personal change is the transformation of the community itself. Parents and students, who are also adults and youth in their greater community, create a contagious civic spark as they organize. Education reform is not only about schools, it is also about the capacity of communities to create great schools. As a reflected concept of their surroundings, schools cannot change if the communities they live in do not value education or the students being educated. Without civic capacity in a community, there is neither reason nor the ability for good schools to exist. Renee and McAlister (2011) believe "community organizing…has the potential to situate education issues within larger economic and social systems, directly address issues of power, and build democratic capacity to sustain meaningful education reforms" (p. 40).

Parents and students, through their organizing, have an ability to concurrently work inside and outside the school system for both school reform and community change. With vision, educational organizers can have significant influence on not only education, but the whole of society. Smock (2004) recognizes the potential of education organizers

writing, "Democracy flourishes when people come together as equals to deliberate over their common affairs, make decisions about public priorities, and influence the social and economic arrangements that shape their everyday lives" (p. 5). He reasons that "collective action for community change makes political and economic structures more responsive to interests and needs" (p. 5).

School reform and community change are dependent on one another. Community capacity is tied to the community's (including community schools') successful development. According to Mediratta et al. (2009), "Schools that succeed do so because community engagement and investment are ongoing. For this reason, community capacity and school system capacity are dynamically related" (p. 158). Warren (2005) argues that "if school reform in the United States is to be successful, it must be linked to revitalization of the communities around our schools" (p. 133). Stone (1998) concurs, stating that "civic capacity is associated with various efforts to improve education" (p. 260). Mediratta et al. (2009) similarly believe "truly transformative change in the educational futures of young people is unlikely to result from strategies focused on improving schools in isolation from communities" (p. 155). Though schools may act as independent entities, they are truly dependent on the communities around them. If they are going to engage in lasting change, students and parents must be focused on both schools and communities; one cannot succeed without the other. In their comparative case study of 11 large American cities in the mid 1990's, Stone et al. (2001) find that a city's school reform efforts improved only through civic capacity, with parents being a

required ingredient. Those cities who had little to no parent support for education reforms were not successful in their reform attempts.

In her account of the Texas IAF and its highly successful Alliance Schools, Shirley's (1997) research serves as an appropriate illustration of what educational organizers can do when they focus both on education and the larger context in which it is situated. In creating this model, the Texas IAF first concentrated on one school and the community around that school. Changing the culture of both, with the help of parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders, church pastors and union stewards, organizers saw drastic improvements in the school's achievement and family/community engagement. Using this first elementary school as a proof of concept, the Texas IAF expanded to more schools and more communities to the point when their strategy became a highly effective turnaround strategy for Texas schools.

Found to be highly successful, the Texas legislature funded full-time organizers to organize schools and communities across the state. These schools became part of the Alliance School collaboration and allowed Alliance Schools to create even richer social capital among one another. Moving education into Texas' civic arena where the entire community could pull together for school reform allowed pockets of Texas that were considered by many as being "too poor," "too uneducated," "too black," or "too Mexican," to claim great, community-owned schools. Shirley writes that the Texas IAF moved schools "from islands of bureaucracy to centers of civic activism" (p. 6). By bridging sectors such as education, religion, politics, and labor, the Texas IAF created powerful coalitions that threatened the status quo. Through the strategy of bringing

together whole communities and creating civic capacity, education organizers in Texas created lasting educational and community change.

Counter-arguments to empowerment. Though most of the literature regarding the organization and empowerment of racially-minoritized parents and students is positively in favor of empowerment, there a few authors who disagree with this concept.

The initial researcher is Riger (1993), who does not so much disagree with parents and students organizing as she does with the idea of empowering everyone. She believes the unintended consequences of empowering people will lead to

> (a) individualism, leading potentially to unmitigated competition and conflict among those who are empowered; and b) a preference for traditionally masculine concepts of mastery, power, and control over traditionally feminine concerns of communication and cooperation. (p. 279).

To her, power is irreparably masculine in its form and therefore empowerment leads to a more masculine world.

In addition, Weissberg (1999) argues that empowerment cannot "be bestowed as a gift to those mired in passivity" (p. 125). Because empowerment is limited, "it is futile" (p. 128). He argues that instead of empowerment "success must come in the context of constrained power" (p. 128). It is impossible to empower everyone, and to act as if everyone should be empowered, including teachers, parents, and students, creates a liberal dumbed-down education that in reality disempowers the poorest of students (Weissberg, 1999).

Finally, in her comparative case sudy, Fine (1993) contends that programs designed to develop parent empowerment "change over time from what was called 'empowerment' into what became crisis intervention" (p. 685). She argues that under-

resourced parents of color are required by their situations to use their limited resources

primarily for survival and therefore are often unable to divert their energies to leadership.

Accordingly, she maintains that parents cannot and should not be responsible for

changing schools.

These arguments, though compelling, are not part of the majority of the modern-

day research that overwhelmingly views parent and student organizing as both positive

for education and society in general.

The Who, What, and How of Activism

"Who" is community? Educational organizing literature discusses this

phenomenon in several ways: parent empowerment, parent-school partnerships, parent

engagement, community-school partnerships, community engagement, community-based

youth organizations (CBYOs), community-based organizations (CBO) and community

empowerment (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Beckett et al., 2012; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001;

Dyrness, 2009; Epstein, 2010; Fabricant, 2011; Fennimore, 2017; Fernández & Paredes

Scribner, 2018; Fuentes, 2009, 2012; Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006; Ishimaru,

2014a, 2014b; Jasis, 2013; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Jones &

Voss, 2007; Kirshner, 2015; Martinez-Cosio, 2010; McAlister et al., 2012; McGuinn &

Kelly, 2012; Nygreen, 2016; Olivos, 2004; Paredes Scribner & Fernández, 2017; Shirley,

1997, 2009; Terriquez & Rogers, 2011; Warren, 2005, 2011;Warren & Mapp, 2011;

Welton & Freelon, 2018). Though community members, such as community business

interests, community service leaders, non-profits, political advocacy groups, alumni, and

professional educational organizers, usually add crucial support to parent/student activist

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organizations, grassroots educational organizing is fueled primarily by parents and

students. Community members and professional organizers can play an important role in

starting organizations and setting initial agendas, but to be authentic, groups of parents

and students must take the lead in deciding both goals and strategies, as well as becoming

the face and voice of the organization (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). In the end they will be

held accountable and those who will endure the most consequences for their organizing.

Parents and students must also lead the way because they have the greatest self-interest

and are most affected by the results of the public school system (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Without them, as discussed in the next section, groups are "Astroturf" (McGuinn &

Kelly, 2012, p. 15).

      Astroturf vs. authentic organizing. Community organizing has many positive

effects and can be a tremendous support to school reform efforts. These examples of

activism include an authentic grassroots agenda that is grounded in the hearts and minds

of the community that these organizations represent. Because organizing creates such a

powerful force, however, there are those who seek to replicate it for their own agendas.

      Over the past three decades, neoliberalists have worked to consume education

systems throughout the country. Though many reformers claim to have the support of the

'community,' arguing that 'these poor families' would want them to close and privatize

their neighborhood's failing schools, they fail to realize that those same schools, failing

or not, are symbols and sources of pride for communities (Nygreen, 2016). In many cases

the neighborhood school has been part of the community for generations, and parents,

whether their experience was good or bad, expect their children to also attend that same

school. No matter the inequities that exist inside, communities demand an authentic voice in its revamping, closing, and/or privatization. If their school is to turn into a charter, then not only should the decision come from the community, but the charter must also be based on, and held accountable to the community's values (Welton & Freelon, 2018). Without this form of community engagement, many charter schools will never represent the communities they claim to work on behalf of.

McGuinn and Kelly (2012) observed this reaction when parents, students, and community members expressed their dissatisfaction for a neoliberal reform plan that applied "market-based principals" (Nygreen, 2016, p. 204) to schools. Shouting Newark, New Jersey's superintendent off stage during a community information session, community members made it clear that district officials had not received support from the community. A Newark school board member summed this up by saying,

> If we don't figure out a way to empower local communities and this looks like a colonial sort of thing, where there's a regime of folks who drop out of the sky with this self-righteous belief that they know what is better for these kids than their own communities, then we'll fail. (p. 15)

In documenting a community group's 34-day hunger strike, Welton and Freelon (2018) illustrate the lengths communities will go in resisting decisions to close schools when they are not represented. Many communities may be forced to accept "what's best for them," but through creating their own organized power, communities and districts alike realize that they do not have to go quietly (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012; Nygreen, 2016; Warren, 2018; Welton & Freelon, 2018).

Dyrness (2009) discusses this reaction as well in her research of a Latinx immigrant parent group who was excluded by a charter development team claiming to

have authentic parent support. The team of teachers, writing in their request for proposal (RFP) that they would represent and engage the parents of the community, allowed parents only symbolic representation on the team. In response, parents organized themselves into a group they called Madres Unidos. Through this organization they rallied together and forcefully demanded their voices be heard and included in the RFP process. With these tactics however, parents were looked at with distaste from the design team who felt their reactions were unwarranted and unreasonable. Defying the deficit thinking of the teachers, who thought of the parents as uneducated immigrants who could not have the educational expertise to contribute to the process, Madres Unidos developed their own research into how other parents felt about the RFP. Dyrness (2009) observes,

> The interviews allowed them to compare their experiences with those of other parents and analyze them together in light of broader patterns at the school. The new understanding they developed, along with the skills, confidence, and credibility they gained as researchers, allowed them to approach the teachers from a different place and to command the teachers' respect. (p. 44)

It was only through these accomplishments that parents were admitted conditionally to the design team (Dyrness, 2009).

Like the design team Madre Unidos had to organize against, there are other neoliberal organizations who look to use parents as props to argue that their reforms have authentic community roots. They do this by creating Education Reform Advocacy Organizations (ERAOs) (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). Though these organizations do, at times, create authentic parent organizing and support for specific reforms, most of the ERAOs are what many legislators have labeled "Astroturf" (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012, p.12) organizations, meaning that on the surface they may look like authentic community

support, but deep down, they are professional educational organizers trying to push their own agendas. Hartney (2014) goes so far as to say that parent activists can only create "conversion" (p. 3) power, or truly create and change legislation, by including professional lobbyists. He contends that parents cannot have such power on their own. He goes on to argue that without this lobbying support parents only have the power to sometimes, with "reforms to the democratic process" (p. 3), replace local school boards or become a "legislative subsidy" (p. 5) to officials who are already sympathetic to their cause. Hartney (2014) fails to see the cultural transformation developed though these groups' actions and only gauges success on their direct influence in passing policy.

According to Kelly (2014), ERAOs see parents as "potential energy" that they seek to "channel…toward particular ends" (p. 6). They work to "identify parent activists, prepare them to participate, and help them to build an organization—a sustainable generator of grassroots power" (p. 6). Unfortunately, the organizations they hope to build are very rarely directed and run by engaged parents. For professional reformers to give up the reigns of an organization means to also give up the power to prescribe the agenda of that organization (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). Warren (2011) writes that nearly "500 community organization groups now work to reform public education in low-income communities across the country" (p. 485). However, he also observes that

> the civic landscape is now skewed toward advocacy organizations that speak for people, rather than involve them directly in civic and political life. Most organizations either provide services to or advocate for low-income families; few serve as vehicles for their active participation. (p. 488)

Many neoliberal reformers see parents as a means to an end and have disparaging views of the parents themselves. McGuinn and Kelly (2012) interviewed several officials who felt this way, including Baltimore City Public Schools' CEO Andres Alonso who, responding to the fact that few under-resourced parents of color get involved in reform, said that, "everyone wants change, as long as it doesn't affect them in any way" (p. 12). ERAOs know that in order to push forward with reforms, they must enlist parents to their cause. Though true parent engagement is the most lucrative way to use parents, ERAOs have difficulty gaining trust in communities who are wary of outsiders (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). McGuinn and Kelly (2012) quote a professional ERAO organizer as saying that "building trust is crucial but often difficult given the hostility of many urban parents toward perceived outsiders" (p. 16). They find that it takes time to build authentic relationships, however it is time that most ERAOs do not have as they try to keep up with the legislative cycle (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012). McGuinn and Kelly (2012) find:

> Even those parents who are aware and concerned about the poor performance of the public schools will often resist change, particularly when major changes are being pushed rapidly. There can be a real tension, however, between the need to build a constituency for reform in the community (which takes time) and reformers' desire to press forward quickly. (p. 12)

Lacking the required relationships, most ERAO's become what they say they are not, Astroturf.

Collective action. Though there are many theories regarding collective action and the development of social movements, two broad schools of thought are most often referenced in the literature: resource mobilization theory, which uses Olson's (1971) seminal philosophy of self-interest, and Goffman's (1974) psychosocial framing theory.

The first is a structural theory implying that collective action only occurs once self-interest, structures (such as social movement organizations (SMOs)), resources and opportunities are aligned for action. This is best illustrated by Andrews (2001), who finds that organizers who joined the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty in Mississippi out of self-interest for their own rights and the rights of their families and communities, were more influential when they used both "mass-based tactics and routine negotiation with agency officials" (p. 89). Using tactics such as marches and sit-ins, organizers mobilized their resources for collective action and used political opportunities that allowed for the development of SMOs and more moderated strategies.

Goffman's (1974) theory, however, is not so much about the person's self-interest, but her state of mind and how she interprets both the world and her actions in it. His theory, and the extensions of it, explain how people develop a collective identity, or solidarity around a pressing issue, and social consciousness. Depending on how an issue is "framed" (Hunt & Benford, 1993, p. 493) people tell each other stories to "become aware…become active…become committed…and become weary" (Hunt & Benford, 1993, p. 493), which is the cycle of collective action. According to Hunt and Benford (1993), in their research using two ethnographic studies on the peace movement in 1982 and 1991, people relate to both the issue and their experiences in their political action with "associational declarations, disillusionment anecdotes, atrocity tales, 'personal is political' reports, guide narratives, and war stories" (p. 493) to create solidarity within the movement. Social consciousness or the process of politicization is developed when

people either see themselves as being unjustly treated or begin to understand institutions, historical events, and/or current situations as being unjust (Hunt & Benford,1993).

Rather than compete against the other, realizing the complex process required for effective collective action, modern social movement theorists have conceptually bridged the two frameworks, allowing the full picture of collective action to emerge (Cress & Snow, 2000; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996; Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986).

Even with this combination of theories however, according to some researchers collective action is still difficult to develop and sustain. Hartney (2014) warns "parents (especially low-income parents) often lack the resources such as time, money, and civic skills that are necessary to organize themselves and wage an effective lobbying campaign" and that "these barriers often preclude low-income parents from becoming politically active" (p. 5). McGuinn and Kelly (2012) find

> the poor tend to have lower levels of education and engage less in all types of political activity, including voting, communicating with elected officials, attending public meetings, joining interest groups, and contributing to campaigns. (p. 4)

This assessment of under-resourced parents of color is also echoed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) and Kelly (2014). These authors agree, using deficit arguments, that under-resourced Latinx and African Americans have "low levels of efficacy and trust in the government" making democratic participation and collective action even less of a possibility (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012, p. 29). These deficit excuses for low participation among Latinx and African Americans do not, however, account for the civil rights movement or the increasing organization of under-resourced parents and

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students of color in urban and rural areas across the country (Beckett et al., 2012; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Dyrness, 2009; Fabricant, 2011; Fennimore, 2017; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018; Fuentes, 2009, 2012; Ishimaru, 2014a, 2014b; Jasis, 2013; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012; Jones & Voss, 2007; Kirshner, 2015; Martinez-Cosio, 2010; McAlister et al., 2012; Nygreen, 2016; Olivos, 2004; Paredes Scribner & Fernández, 2017; Shirley, 1997; Terriquez & Rogers, 2011; Warren, 2005, 2011, 2018; Warren & Mapp, 2011; Welton & Freelon, 2018).

Though research has determined "people [only] participate because they have the resources to do so, they are politically engaged, [and/or] someone asked them to [through] 'networks of recruitment'" (McGuinn & Kelly, 2012, p. 29), this does not seem to be the case in most parent and student organizing where collective action is developed more from cases of self-interest, developmental, and psychosocial processes. Delgado-Gaitan (2001) describes how self-interest, framing, and the development of social capital drives the collective action of families in the small town of Carpenteria, California. She finds collective action was possible because parents initially began to understand that for their children to become successful they needed to collectively engage with educators. They did this by first creating a "brave space" (Arao & Clemens, 2013, p.141) that allowed for self-empowerment. Though these parents had little in the form of material resources, they had optimism "in the midst of hardship" (p. 188), a way to reach out to other families for support, and a cause that made "their lives meaningful" (p. 188). Aligning with Goffman, Delgado-Gaitan demonstrates how empowering individual parents creates stories that allows parents to collectively frame their grievances as

injustices. Parents find that "joining with others [they] gain a different perspective and learn new ways to address problems, which motivate [them] to become proactive" (p. 152). Once parents develop a sense of solidarity or collective identity through their language, culture, experiences, and circumstances, they were able to access the resulting power of collective action.

As the parents of Carpentaria illustrate, more than anything else, helping parents and students find a brave space where they can discuss their thoughts, hopes, and fears is most important to collective action because it allows them to come together in a physical space, understand they are not alone in their circumstances, and know that together they can do something about it. Brodkin (2007) discusses this political home where political consciousness and identity are formed. Reflecting on the politicization of her participants, she writes,

> As part of an identity that spanned national and social borders, they began to analyze the world and create meaning and value systems that were reflective of their own social identities. These facilitated developing a shared consciousness and vision of social change. (p. 98)

Warren (2005) also recognized this political home in a small group meeting at the Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago, where he observed, "These women strike me as comfortable here. They know exactly what's going on. They feel ownership of their work and take responsibility for this organization" (p. 153). Similarly, in their case study of a group of Latinx parents who organized other Spanish speaking parents in an elementary school, Fernandez and Paredes Scribner note, "The study circles provided a setting within which parents could share experiences, offer examples and suggestions, and identify common barriers" (p. 65). Additionally, in her research on youth

development and activism, O'Donoghue (2006) continues this line of thought with the idea of creating "counterpublics" (p. 230) as "alternative spaces where [youth] are not assumed deficient, invisible, or hypervisible, or too young or inexperienced to take on real responsibilities and important issues" (p. 229). In these cases, collective action was just another term for finding community.

Along with the importance of finding a political and symbolic home, the literature describes most cases of student and parent organizing as developmental, creating processes of collective identity and politicization through intentional political education (Beckett et al., 2012; Goddard & Myers, 2011; Kirshner, 2015; Lakin & Mahoney, 2006; Nygreen, 2016; Shirley, 1997; Warren & Mapp, 2011; Yates & Youniss, 1998). In his research of a nascent parent organization, Nygreen (2016) terms this political education as "The Alanzia Way" (p. 203). This deliberate form of education was taught by Alanzia's "educator-organizers" (p. 204) who trained parents to develop "a critical social analysis that recognized the reality of institutionalized and interlocking structures of oppression" (p. 207). This curriculum "defined schooling as inherently oppressive and located the causes of educational failure in the broader system of inequality rather than individual students, parents, and teachers" (p. 207). The Alanzia Way and other organized forms of political instruction are rooted in the "popular education" of Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This form of education "strives to empower the oppressed to lead their own liberation struggles" (p. 208).

Though not as formal as The Alanzia Way, Olivos (2004) observes "as parents become more knowledgeable they become more assertive in demanding [rights] from the

school" (p. 29). Yates and Youniss (1998) in their case study of African-American youth

engaged in a service-learning program find the education program "had awakened

[students] to problems in society and opened their eyes to the plight of people such as the

homeless" (p. 507). The students' year-long experience led them to understand "their

responsibility to help others less fortunate" (p. 507). Yates and Youniss also notice,

> Students' understanding of the meaning of being Black Americans was also a central issue directly addressed in the essays and discussion groups. As students considered the societal distribution of power and government policies toward minority groups, they reflected on their own political status in society and their ability to alter that status. (p. 503)

Often the act of successful collective action in itself leads to the development of

individual and group identity and politicization, personal and organizational efficacy, and

increases the chances for further collective action. In Saul Alinsky's (1971) seminal work

on organizing, *Rules for Radicals*, he argues that winning small victories is almost as

important as winning large ones. He instructs,

> The organizer's job is to begin to build confidence and hope in the idea of organization and thus in the people themselves: to win limited victories, each of which will build confidence and the feeling that 'if we can do so much with what we have now just think what we will be able to do when we get big and strong.' (p. 114)

Similarly, in her discussion of the politicization of activists, Brodkin (2007) writes,

"They experienced a powerful sense of political agency through successful collective

action. For some, being willing to take action was a conscious trust of their new

perspectives and identities" (p. 98). In referring to a parent involved in activism, Welton

and Freelon also explain, "Ms. Marshall's engagement in this process politicized her, and

she became more involved in school reform efforts…she exhibited leadership skills

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through an engagement in public discourse" (p. 92). Lopez (2003) finds "These nonacademic arguments are 'winnable issues' that give people a sense of their own power…winning a campaign, no matter how small, builds parents' 'confidence.' It creates a sense of efficacy to change public institutions" (p. 3). Finally, organizers in Kelly's (2014) research also believe small wins help in creating collective momentum. Kelly (2014) observes that submitting "William's Complaints, which allows parents to call for an inspection of a particular school-level issue" helps parents get "a couple wins under their belt" (p. 42). This gets parents excited about the action and leaves them wanting more (Kelly, 2014). Success is a powerful motivator in generating collective action.

Finally, education organizers have found that knowledge is not only power, but a means to empower their collective action. In several cases of organizing, parents and students, whether independently or in concert with academics, have used participatory action research (PAR) to both legitimate their claims for collective action and as a rallying cry for others to join their cause (Bertrand, 2014; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Dyrness, 2009; Fennimore, 2017; Fuentes, 2009; Kirshner, 2015; Warren, 2018; Warren & Mapp, 2011). In her account of PAR with an African-American and Latinx parent group and faculty at the University of California at Berkley, Fuentes (2009) argues

> PAR is a complex and powerful site of knowledge production, collaboration, resistance, and struggle that sees disenfranchised communities as keepers of critical social knowledge with full capabilities of being both the subjects and architects of research. (p. 71)

She finds that PAR developed "learning power" (p. 70) in the participants, which included "learning about power, power of learning, and learning to be powerful" (p. 70). This knowledge empowered parents to balance their authority with that of their school

district and city officials, refocusing the city's agenda on equity. One parent recognized the influence PAR had on the group's collective action saying, "If I could show the parents how the experience of their child is shared by 1,000 other students, they could get fired up and ready to help out" (p. 72). Knowledge is a powerful motivator for social change.

Unilateral vs. relational power. Though Saul Alinsky (1971) is considered to be the father of modern day direct political organizing, and is often known for his over-the-top tactics, his overall strategy is also one of relational power. Parent and student groups have found that if they want to be sure teachers and administrators are on their side, partnership is more productive that alienation (Warren, 2005). School reform is not a matter of the superintendent or the school board saying yes or no to a policy, teachers and principals must demonstrate support for any decision to be enacted at the classroom level. Kelly (2014) explains, "Organizing efforts that work in opposition to existing educators will have a difficult time improving what goes on in classrooms" (p. 11).

To successfully influence school reform, organizations must walk a fine line between unilateral power, or "power over" (Warren, 2005, p. 138), and relational power, or "power to" (Warren, 2005, p. 138). As Warren (2005) explains, "unilateral power is zero-sum, typically with winners and losers. By contrast relational power should reflect a win-win situation" (p. 138). Many SMOs focus on unilateral power by pressuring institutions through disruptive tactics such as walk outs, marches, or divisive media campaigns (Andrews, 2001). Educational organizing however, has found that relational strategies that "build trust and cooperation with school staff" (Warren, 2005, p. 138) is

preferred. Even social movement scholars Cress and Snow (2000) find, in their study of 15 homeless SMOs, that "combinatorial rather than unidimensional pathways" (p. 1063) provided SMOs the greatest traction with the cities they worked in. Arriaza (2004) called these approaches "constructivist and adversarial" (p. 14). And Warren and Mapp (2011) named them "transformative, not transactional" relationships (p. 207). McAlister et al. (2012) argues, however, that if relational strategies do not produce productive relationships, students' and parents' power of organizing still rests in "the implied threat that the group can take public action when collaboration and negotiation fail" (p. 202). It is up to educators whether they will bridge or rebuff such organizing. If educators choose to work with organizers, instead of opposing them, parents and students can "prove to be formidable allies for school leaders and teachers" (p. 203).

Martinez-Cosio (2010) details this dichotomy of power in her comparative research of Latinx and African-American parent/student/community groups in California. She finds that the Latinx group, using more confrontational tactics, were excluded from negotiations. In addition to Martinez-Cosio's account, Freelon and Welton (2018) argue that

> both top-down and bottom-up power is needed to make equity-oriented changes...parents will need the formal, positional power of district leaders and policymakers to make the official decisions needed to accomplish racial justice in education. (p. 99)

Documenting the extreme unilateral tactics that parents and students took in their protest over the closing of schools, Welton and Freelon (2018) further explain that organizers in their "case studies had to take these drastic actions because political and educational leaders still do not view them as equal partners in educating their own

children" (p.99). Though the relationship strategy is decided by the organizers, they are set by the educators' response to their requirements for educational justice.

Critical race praxis. Another aspect of the literature is how parents and students create critical race praxis through their organizing. Fuentes (2012) and Paredes Scribner and Fernández (2017) document how critical race and Latino Critical (LatCrit) theories were put into practice through parent and student organizing. They argue that the act of organizing allowed organizers to become critical and create their own counternarratives to the racist and nativist narratives told by educators.

In her three-year, ethnographic study on the African-American parent group Parents of Children of African Ancestry (POCAA), Fuentes observes that "unlike traditional reform that often ignores issues of race and power…POCAA's strategy revolved around building on the inherent political power of the most marginalized stakeholders" (p. 629). Using this "inherent political power" (p. 629), POCAA students and parents were able to resist the racist attitudes that formed their education and created their activism. This allowed them to further battle the oppressive educational system through the development of their own narrative that disproved the deficit arguments waged against them.

In their research of the Latinx immigrant parent group Adelantando Familias en la Communidad (AFC), Paredes Scribner and Fernández (2017) articulate this critical race praxis formally by first documenting many of the hegemonic narratives created against the group. They then counter these narratives by documenting how these "racist nativist ideologies affected and shaped AFC's experiences and existence within the school" (p.

899). Observing "action nets" (p. 899) of repeated organizational action and interaction, they claim that many of these produced organizational narratives about the role of parents "cast parents into gendered roles that are limited to supporting school activities" (p. 899) such as school fundraisers and classroom helpers. Once organized, however, parents had different or opposing ideas about their role in the school, seeing themselves as central to cultural and political activities, subverting the school's view of them (p. 899).

Though critical race praxis has only been found in a couple of accounts of educational organizing, this praxis is common in many racially-minoritized parent and student groups. Mediratta et al. (2009) exemplifies this, writing, "All organizing groups acknowledge the linkages between race and economic outcomes…[groups] want class and race analysis to be at the center" (p. 144) of their activism. Warren (2018) describes racism as central to what he refers as the "Educational Justice Movement" (p. xix) explaining that, "the new movement that has been built over the last ten years explicitly names racism as the central problem in school failure and calls for strategies that directly address racial equity and justice" (p. xxi). This research mirrors its participants by analyzing their organizing within the frame of societal and educational racism. By allowing their participants' voices to come through, these researchers merely document the counter-narratives that are already being practiced day-to-day.

Organizing and Educational Leadership

Developing educational leadership for social justice. Social justice leadership is not a new concept to educational organizing. In fact, it is the chief strategy and "primary task" (Shirley, 1997, p. 70) of most educational organizing groups studied. Organized

parent and student leadership is approached in three separate but related ways in the literature: as an organizing strategy, an exemplar for educational leaders, and as shared leadership where parents and students are able to become equals within the social justice praxis of positional leaders. The last approach is an emerging concept within educational leadership and its subfield of social justice leadership or transformative leadership (Shields, 2010), in that there are, so far, less than a handful of researchers who argue for this approach.

Mediratta et al. (2009) address the fact that leadership serves as the centerpiece of educational organizing. They explain, "The process of building power to create lasting social change begins with the intentional development of leadership among ordinary people at a grassroots level" (p. 139). Fuentes (2012) finds that all parents in her research group "practiced under the philosophy that they were all leaders of the group" (p. 635). Through frequent leadership trainings, Mediratta et al. (2009) observe that parents engaged in a "range of supports to expand members' skills in the mechanics of organizing, including public speaking and negotiation skills, facilitation skills, relationship building through one-on-ones, and campaign development" (p. 145). Like Mediratta et al., in their comparative case study Warren and Mapp (2011) detail an extensive leadership-building process that parents and students became committed to.

This process includes:

1. Listening sessions;

2. Two-way conversations and group connections with others so "they can come to see their individual problems represent a collective concern" (p. 214);

3. Attention to personal growth and relationship building;

4. Action, "acquire leadership skills and practice them" (p. 214);

5. Scaffold and support;

6. Challenge, leaders "are encouraged to take risks and try out new roles" (p. 215);

7. Formal leadership and research trainings and workshops;

8. Mentoring, "leaders work with a diverse set of other leaders" (p. 216).

It is important that through this process, parents and students "build a foundation of shared understandings for public relationships and action" (p. 216). Additionally, Mediratta et al. (2009) also find that "organizations' work to define a shared vision of equity and justice is an essential component of community capacity for transformative change" (p. 158).

This leadership style is similar, though currently not deliberately connected to transformative leadership. In this form of educational leadership, critical reflection and action remain imperative, as does the process of developing leadership capacity. Dantley and Tillman (2006) realize this praxis through the advancement of what they refer to as

"moral transformative leadership" (p. 23). Viewing leadership for social justice as a primarily moral act, their definition

> focuses on the use as well as the abuse of power in institutional settings…deconstructs the work of school administration in order to unearth how leadership practices generate and perpetuate inequities and the marginalization of members of the learning community who are outside the dominant culture…sees schools as sites that not only engage in academic pursuits, but also as locations that help to create activists to bring about the democratic reconstruction of society. (p. 23)

Furthering the ideals inherent in moral transformative leadership, Shields (2013) writes that this form of leadership, which she refers to simply as transformative leadership, includes eight tenets:

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change;

- the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice;

- a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice;

- the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;

- an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;

- an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness;

- the necessity of balancing critique with promise;

- the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 21)

Welton and Freelon (2018) urge new educational leaders to use the leadership skills learned from organizers in their own leadership for "equity and social justice" (p. 82). In this way they use organizers as exemplars in leadership. They argue

applying a community organizing framework to one's leadership practice can help
challenge any stereotypes and deficit images of communities of color formal
school leaders may hold, and, instead, envision ways in which parents and
community members can be positioned as integral to school decision-making. (p.
83)

They recommend three strategies of organizing leadership that leaders can learn from.
These include "relationship building" (p. 90), "their willingness to engage in direct action
when needed" (p. 92), and "collective action leadership" (p. 92).

Building on such exemplars, principals in Ishimaru's (2013) research put
organizing skills into practice as a framework for educational leadership. Emphasizing
shared or distributive leadership, which implies "an expansion of roles so that more
people take on leadership" (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 7), Ishimaru (2013) details how principals
established their leadership within a "principal as organizer" (p. 3) model. With the help
of a parent-community organization, principals learned organizing leadership skills such
as "building relationships, facilitating collaboration, and creating opportunities for
leadership" (p. 8). Though principals understood the concept of parent empowerment at
different levels, they were able to create a culture that balanced "power asymmetries" (p.
24) allowing them to create authentic relationships with parents, build parents' capacity
for leadership, and support parents' "political leadership" (p. 32). Though principals often
struggled with balancing their role as a shared leader within district expectations that
demanded they "be the sole voice and authority for the school" (p. 34), this form of
leadership allowed principals to begin to build a bridge between "the 'worlds' of
professional control and community interest" (p. 41).

Ishimaru's (2013) research is in contrast to Khalifa's (2012) study developing the principal's role as a community leader. Khalifa (2012) finds that principals developed "trust, credibility, and rapport" (p. 439) by becoming more visible in the community and advocating for community causes. Though Khalifa's principals successfully fostered "overlapping school and community spaces" (p. 441) and developed "personable exchanges" (p. 445) with parents and community, the principals remained "heroic" (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 6) leaders who continued to act as gatekeepers to the school. Unlike Ishimaru's (2013) principals, these principals did not engage parents as equal leaders in their schools.

In addition to Ishimaru (2013), three recent studies expand upon the idea of sharing leadership within an organizing leadership framework and social justice praxis, viewing the leadership of parents and students equal to the leadership of positional leaders (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018; Rodela, 2016). Researching extensive literature on social justice leadership, Bertrand and Rodela (2018) find there is little to no reference of students or parents as "agents with valuable viewpoints" (p. 16). They notice that in the literature, concepts of educational leadership are "characterized as 'voice,' 'involvement,' or 'partnership'" (p. 25). Using the theory of collective transformative agency, they argue that there are many leaders, not just those in positional roles. Due to this, parents and students are most equipped to be central leaders in the resistance of structural and personal racism. They argue, "Our theoretical framework suggests that the experiential knowledge of youth, parents, and community

members of color is essential to understanding systemic racism in schools and intersecting forms of oppression" (p. 18).

Bertrand and Rodela credit their theoretical origins to Rodela (2016), who similarly argues that, through organizing, parents and students can become "emergent" (p. 22) educational social justice leaders. She uses "applied critical leadership (ACL)" (p. 22) to explain how Latina mothers in her case study developed leadership skills as they confronted "racism, sexism, and anti-immigrant sentiment" (p. 22). She defines "emergent social justice leadership" (p. 22) calling it "a budding process towards transformational equity, where individuals grow in their critical understanding of systemic inequalities present in and around schools toward action and advocacy" (p. 22). Unlike Bertrand and Rodela, however, she only sees parents' leadership as emerging and not fully acquired leadership for social justice.

The final reference to parents and students as social justice leaders comes from Fernández and Paredes Scribner (2018). They use community cultural wealth theory to root out the assets the Latinx parent group in their study used to develop their ability to be social justice leaders in the school where the group organized. Though Fernández and Paredes Scribner (2018) illustrate the forms of overlapping capital well in their study, in the end they do not specifically match this capital with skills of social justice or transformative leadership. Their argument is inspiring, but incomplete. Thus, this concept of parents and students as leaders for social justice in schools, sharing leadership equally with positional leaders, has just begun to unfold within the literature.

Literature Summary

Through organizing, parent and student groups disrupt and dismantle the racist, sexist, nativist and homophobic power structures of America's public schools. They build their powerful armor through politically conscious education and research, leadership development, and collective action. Though just beginning to be analyzed within the educational leadership scholarship, parents and students empower themselves into commanding educational and community leaders who focus their power on eliminating racism and other inequities. Through balancing the power base inherent within school structures, parents can leverage and demand educational justice for all children, especially those who have been historically underserved.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter builds on the research question, problem, purpose, and literature introduced in the first two chapters. These first three chapters create the foundation for this study. Using Chapter Two's Review of Literature, this chapter will discuss the intended theoretical framework. This will include a unique theoretical model. Reviewing the research question, this chapter will then discuss the new multi-method methodology to be used to answer the specific question and meet the intended purpose of this study. After discussing the research sample, methods of data collection, timeline and analysis, and reliability and validity of the study, the chapter will close with a discussion of the study's limitations and the researcher's positionality as told through an autobiographical portrait.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical model. Articulating a continuous relationship between community cultural wealth, critical race theory/ Latinx critical theory (CRT/ LatCrit), and the process of social justice praxis as operationalized through collective transformative agency, under-resourced parents and students of color can create a unique dialogue that can specifically address and interrogate the racialized scripts encountered in both the educational leadership literature and in their everyday lives. In this unique conceptual

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model, aptly named the *Vassilaros critical leadership model* (Gurulé, 2019) by this study,

racially-minoritized parents and students take stock of their strengths and resources, using

them to assess their status within an educational system guided by race and other

intersections of oppression. Organizing collectively, they use this assessment to question,

reflect, create, and act in both their daily lives, within their community, and within their

schools. This includes interrogating racialized scripts and other oppressive educational

policies and practices. Furthermore, this theory may lead to an original product that may

be directly developed from this interrogation, further formalizing parents' and students'

transformative leadership. The next sections will describe each theory and the influence it

has in the interrogation of the institutional scripts. The theoretical model in Figure 3.1

further illustrates these relationships.
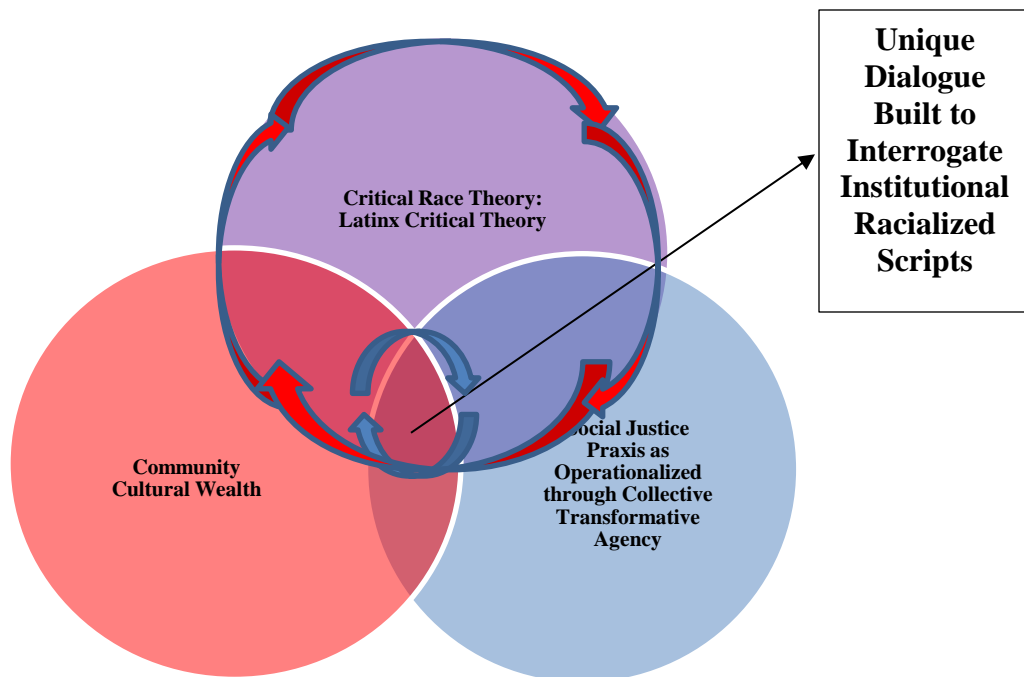
Figure 3.1. Vassilaros critical leadership conceptual model.

Community cultural wealth. This is a theory developed by Yosso (2005) to explain "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Through this theory, Yosso (2005) recognizes funds of knowledge as expressed through capital. Though Lubienski (2003) cautions those who use funds of knowledge and cultural capital synonymously, writing that cultural capital includes the idea of deficit, while funds of knowledge are not terms of social economics, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) do not believe funds of knowledge and capital need to be thought of as exclusive theories. They argue that funds of knowledge can be converted to use as capital if successfully recognized by educators, parents, and students and transmitted effectively into the curriculum. They emphasize the need for not only educators to recognize and transmit funds of knowledge, but parents and students to activate their own funds of knowledge to convert them into inherently rich, usable capital that can be activated for academic success. In this way funds of knowledge can be used to examine existing power imbalances and inequities in educational and societal structures.

Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth emphasizes this "recognition, transmission, conversion, and activation or mobilization" (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011, p. 165) of funds of knowledge into capital. Yosso (2005) defines cultural capital as something that is possessed by a community, as well as by an individual. In doing so she redefines capital as something that is everyone's property, no longer reserved for the dominant few. In this framework she recognizes that several "forms of capital are nurtured" by communities, including "aspirational, navigational, social,

linguistic, familial, and resistant" (p. 77) capital, which overlap and develop each other into a richer and denser capital than any one of them could be apart. These community cultural capital are defined as follows:

- "Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77);

- "Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (p. 78);

- "Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (p. 79);

- "Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources" (p. 79);

- "Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80); and

- "Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 81).

In addition to these forms of converted funds of knowledge or capital are what Giraldo, Huerta, and Solórzano (2018) call "dark' experiences" (p. 50). A term originated by Zipin (2009), dark funds of knowledge allow parents and students to conceive of their funds of knowledge as the light "within dark spaces" (Giraldo et al., 2018, p. 50). Acknowledging a person's dark experiences, such as "life-altering and impactful traumas that ultimately triggered and defined" (p. 50) a person's identity, allows these experiences

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to be redefined as positive lessons that have become "a means of survival and adaption" (p. 50). Including these as part of a person's funds of knowledge allows them to become exceptionally powerful forms of capital once converted and activated.

Community cultural wealth is an important intrapersonal dimension to the theoretical model because it describes the wealth of assets and skills parents and students of color will possess and build upon as they engage in social justice praxis as expressed through collective transformative agency and develop new skills associated with transformative leadership. As their community cultural wealth is informed by CRT/LatCrit, parents and students can articulate this wealth to engage in a process of interrogation and leadership. This theory illustrates that parents and students do not live in a vacuum and are instead unique dynamic products of their histories, cultures, families, and communities. Together with insights available through CRT/LatCrit and their empowered participation in the process of collective social justice praxis as operationalized through collective transformative agency, parents and students will be able to call on their own personal strengths to both view themselves as leaders and challenge the scripts assumed about their leadership.

Critical race theory/Latinx critical theory (CRT/LatCrit). First developed for the study and practice of law in the 1970's by law scholars such as Derick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, CRT has expanded to include other disciplines such as sociology and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005). "CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and

discourses" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Yosso (2005) argues for the use of CRT in education,

writing,

> It is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. (p. 74)

Yosso is hopeful that CRT can become a tool to expose racism in educational structures

and practices, while also leading to a liberatory form of schooling. Lopez (2003a) shares

this hope and emphasizes the need for CRT in education, and more specifically

educational leadership. He writes,

> As scholars who prepare future educational leaders, we have a duty to know and raise questions about race and racism in society, as well as an ethical responsibility to interrogate systems, organizational frameworks, and leadership theories that privilege certain groups and/or perspectives over others. We also have a duty to challenge oppression in all forms and an obligation to interrogate how schools and administrators oftentimes silence students who are culturally different. (p. 70)

Lopez concludes that "a critical reevaluation of the knowledge base in educational

leadership must be made to address this toxic trend" (p. 71).

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) detail three basic tenets of CRT. The first supports

the idea that "racism is ordinary, not aberrant" (p. 8). Racism is not relegated to

individual acts but is systemic. By making racism appear to be the act of evil or ignorant

individuals or groups, such as the Nazi Party or the Klu Klux Klan, liberal color-blind

notions of reality can stay securely in place in what is considered socially appropriate

standards of equality (Lopez, 2003a). These socially acceptable ideals lead to "'race

neutral' laws and institutional structures, practices, and policies [that] perpetuate

racial/ethnic…inequality" (Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005, p. 274). By refusing to discuss or interrogate race relations, systems and structures can continue as if racism no longer exists, when in fact its consequences are all too real for racially-minoritized individuals and communities (Lopez, 2003a).

The second tenet holds that the American "system of white-over-color ascendency serves important purposes, both psychic and material" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 8). Within this proposition lays the general construction of whiteness as property or the existence of white privilege (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This is the notion that the dominant group in American society benefits from racist practices and the subjugation of minority groups. This theory explains why African Americans and Latinx people are often excluded or looked upon with distrust in public spaces.

Due to the use of cell phones and social media, people can now document these instances of racism. For example, there has recently been a barrage of incidents where white people have called the police on what they believe to be suspicious black and brown people in public spaces. In 2018 the hashtag #WhileBlack went viral in the United States. Within this hashtag are numerous cell phone videos of white people calling the police on black people for no reason other than the color of their skin. Examples include black people

> barbecuing in Oakland, California; selling water in San Francisco; golfing in
> Pennsylvania; mowing the lawn in Ohio; swimming in a public pool in South
> Carolina; inspecting a home in Tennessee; shopping at a T-Mobile store in
> Northern California; moving out of an Airbnb rental in Southern California; [and]
> waiting inside a Starbucks in Philadelphia. (Ortiz, 2018)

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Whites, however, are not subject to such scrutiny; their whiteness serves as collateral and allows them to enjoy public spaces freely without harassment.

This theory of constructed white domination is also the reason for what Derrick Bell calls "interest convergence" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). This is the theory that racial progress, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), only occurs when the interests of both dominant and minority groups materialize simultaneously. In *Brown*, historical analysis has uncovered that the Court only decided that separate was not equal because race relations in the United States were becoming problematic for the image of America during the Cold War. America could not claim to be the land of democracy and freedom while still appearing to be racist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Finally, the third tenet is the understanding that the idea of "race and races are the products of social thought and relations" (p. 9). This "'social construction' thesis" (p. 9) disrupts the view that race is a "scientific truth" endowed "with pseudo-permanent characteristics" (p. 9) that result in stereotypes or "cultural scripts" (p. 10). These scripts undermine and "dehumanize" (Freire, 1970, p. 8) the reality of the individual and community by framing their experiences as "other" (Kushamiro, 2000, p. 25).

Expanding upon the idea of social construction however, CRT uses this tenant to develop "differential racialization—the idea that each race has its own origins and ever-evolving history" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 10). This theory has developed into the "notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism" (p 10) which considers that "everyone

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has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances" (p. 11). No one voice speaks for all those of color or intersecting-minoritized identities.

This proposition has led to the development of LatCrit theory, which recognizes the growth of CRT over the years to include the intersectionality of oppression outside the black/white binary (Yosso, 2005). LatCrit "addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality" (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 311). According to Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001), it "is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression" (p. 312).

CRT/LatCrit theory adds an essential dynamic to this study's theoretical model by holding racism and other intersecting forms of oppression central to the experiences of racially-minoritized parents and students and therefore informing their world view. Combined with the assets inherent in community cultural wealth, under-resourced parents and students of color can come to question, reflect, and act to challenge their own oppression. Creating social justice praxis within the process of collective transformative agency, parents and students of color can begin to define their leadership within their communities, schools, and individual lives. This dimension of the theoretical model will permit parents and students to engage in both intrapersonal and extrapersonal aspects of social justice praxis and gives reason for parent and student activism and leadership. The theory argues that in order to truly participate in social justice praxis and begin to interrogate hegemonic ideas, practices, and policies, one must understand the realities

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that racism, sexism, nativism, homophobia, and other intersecting oppressions hold for

both individuals and society as a whole. To engage these institutional racialized scripts

organized parents and students will be deconstructing and reconstructing the role race and

other intersecting identities play in their lives.

Social justice praxis operationalized through collective transformative

agency. Freire (1998) argues that praxis "involves a dynamic and dialectical movement

between 'doing' and 'reflecting on doing'" (p. 43). It is in this process of reflecting that

humans understand their "unfinishedness" (p. 51) and are able to both comprehend the

world and also create "strategies to transform and resist those traditional forms and rituals

that perpetrate undemocratic and marginalizing practices" (Dantley, Beachum &

McCray, 2008, p. 127). Furman (2012) expands upon Freire's concept of praxis by

theorizing that social justice

> praxis involves the continual, dynamic interaction among knowledge acquisition,
> deep reflection, and action at two levels - the intrapersonal and the extrapersonal -
> with the purpose of transformation and liberation. At the intrapersonal level,
> praxis involves self-knowledge, critical self-reflection, and acting to transform
> oneself as a leader for social justice. At the extrapersonal level, praxis involves
> knowing and understanding systemic social justice issues, reflecting on these
> issues, and taking action to address them. (p. 203)

She adds that this form of praxis is developed at five different levels, "the personal, the

interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological" (p. 203).

Operationalizing this process of praxis is collective transformative agency which

conforms praxis into a learning theory that promotes not only reflection and action but

emphasizes creation. A quality of Engeström's (1987) expansive learning theory,

transformative agency occurs when either individuals or groups (collective) break "away

from the given frame of action and [take] the initiative to transform it" (Sannino, Engeström & Lemos, 2016, p. 603). It occurs when persons or groups engage in an "essentially collective endeavor" to begin "to radically question the sense of meaning of the context and to construct a wider alternative context…in a systematic framework" (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). It is a grassroots effort that is developed through the iterative process of "dialectical thinking" (Sannino et al., 2016, p. 604). This thinking allows parents and students to meet and interrogate the racialized scripts that are dialectically opposed to their lived experiences. This allows them to "join their forces to literally create something novel, essentially learning something that does not exist yet" (p. 603).

According to Sannino et al. (2016), learning "occur[s] in a changing mosaic of interconnected activity systems which are energized by contradictions" (p. 140). These contradictions create the context from which a critical dialogue is to occur. For example, contradictions such as the school district proclaiming it values all students when students of color are disciplined in much greater proportion than white students, can begin a process of "conflictual questioning" (p. 151) that leads those in the activity systems (parents, students, principals, teachers, community members, etc.) to look and respond to the system critically in multiple authentic voices.

Building upon the critical insights of CRT/LatCrit and assets developed through community cultural wealth, organized parents and students of color may engage in social justice praxis as expressed through collective transformative agency after a process of conflictual questioning, where they begin to see the limitations of the structures, processes, and leadership of their schools. Engaging in a dialogue of change, they use

social justice praxis as expressed through collective transformative agency as the structure to both form and activate new intrapersonal and extrapersonal reflections and actions. Organized parents and students of color can interrogate institutional racialized scripts and create something new and original from their interrogation.

Methodology

      Research question. As referenced in Chapter One, the research question is, "How do the experiences of under-resourced parents and students of color, organized for educational justice, interrogate the institutional racialized scripts reproduced within educational structures regarding educational leadership for social justice?"

      Qualitative research. Due to the nature of this study, a qualitative methodological approach was used. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative research "is exploratory or descriptive and…stresses the context, setting, and participants' frames of reference" (p. 54). Merriam (2009) expands this statement writing, "All qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The primary goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (p. 24). Creswell (2007) calls qualitative research an "interpretive inquiry" (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). It is through this method that meaning is made of participants' uniquely contextual experiences.

      The purpose of this research is to explore, describe, interpret, and value the experiences of under-resourced parents and students of color in relation to the research question, while also empowering those same parents and students through the research process. This cannot be done using quantitative or positivist methods due to the specific

and contextual nature of the research. It requires incredibly detailed description or "richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 16) data to truly represent and analyze the participants' points of view. Though this research is "non-generalizable" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 99) in terms of "statistical generalization" (Yin, 2018, p. 37) due to the contextual nature and the use of a small sample size, these participants' experiences are of critical importance to both the community they represent and their unique contribution to the field of educational leadership.

       Critical case study portraiture (CCSP). Both the research question and purpose of the study required a novel combination of methodological approaches to critically analyze, empower, and truly illustrate the unique essence of the participants and their experiences. CCSP combines elements of case study, critical race methodology, youth participatory action research (YPAR), and critical evocative portraiture. The next few sections will explain the multi-methodological approach that was used. These descriptions will define each method on its own, while the final section will argue how and why the four needed to be combined to fully answer the research question. This methodological model is also illustrated in Figure 3.2.
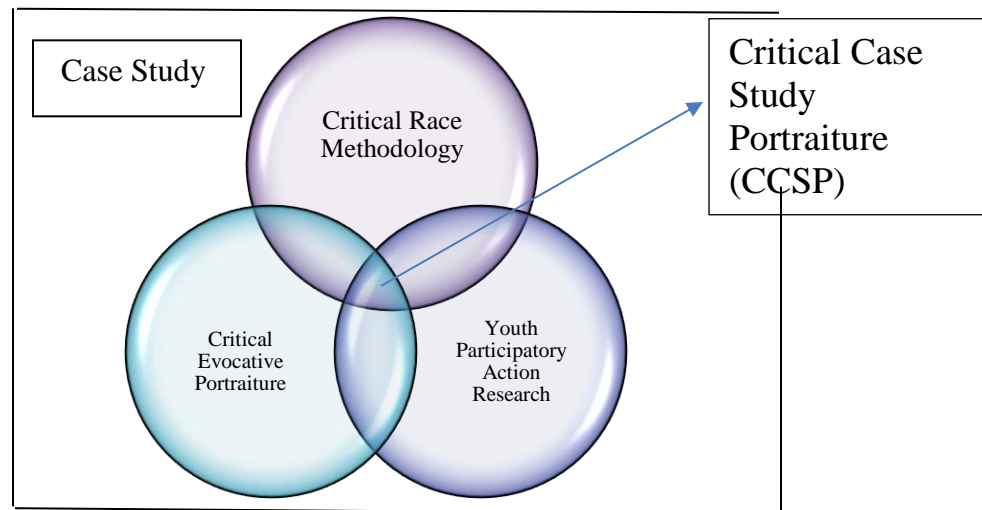
Figure 3.2. CCSP Methodological Model

Case Study. Case study is a methodology that uses "a full variety of evidence" to explain a phenomenon. According to Yin a case study is a method that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident;

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result;

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result;

- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangular fashion. (p. 15)

Due to the bounded nature of the analytic sample, this study exists within a relativist case study where multiple realities of parents and students existing within an authentic and successful activist education organization were developed into a

phenomenological critical evocative portrait and comparatively analyzed. Though the critical portrait will rely primarily on interviews, other evidence such as documents, reflections, and observations were also triangulated to represent the essence of the participants and their experiences. An organizational portrait was written to give context and organizational details to the case and the background wherein the individual critical portraits of the parents and students occurred.

Critical race methodology. Based in the traditions of Marx, Haberman, and Freire, critical qualitative analysis "focuses on societal critique in order to raise consciousness and empower people to bring about change" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). According to Merriam (2009), "Power dynamics are at the heart of critical research…who has power, how is it negotiated, what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power" (p. 35). CRT continues the tradition of focusing on these power negotiations by calling for critical analysis rooted in counternarrative. Using this method, the marginalized can voice their own reality while forming an assault on the powerful structures and systems that be. Delgado (1989), in his journal article appropriately entitled "Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative," argues that counternarratives serve in "destroying the mindset" (p. 2413) promoted in the dominant culture's narratives or "master narrative[s]" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27), allowing those without power to realign the power structure in their favor. "The legacy of racism and White privilege determine whose stories are recounted as historical and whose experiences are dismissed as merely anecdotal" (Yosso, 2006, p. 9). The counternarrative is a tool that disrupts the color-blind dialogue of normative society. Within it, power

shifts to the marginalized and creates a space where no one can tell them how to think, feel, and experience life. It becomes a place for "social, political, and cultural survival and resistance." (p. 14).

CRT counternarratives acknowledge, honor, and promote the existence of diverse epistemology for the creation of new knowledge. Matsuda (as cited in Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008) argues for a novel approach to critical analysis, writing, "Notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice" must be "from groups who have suffered throughout history," without this "moral relativism recedes and identifiable normative priorities emerge" (p. 63). This primary goal of creating an original knowledge base is also common throughout Milner and Howard's (2013) explanation of counternarratives in CRT methodology, maintaining that CRT in education advances the idea that counter-narratives are important and central to

> understanding the nature of reality…The counter-narrative allows the researcher and participants to study and name a reality inconsistent with what might be considered the norm or pervasive otherwise…Emphasis and value are placed on knowledge construction, on naming one's own reality, and on the multiple and varied voices and vantage points among people of color. (p. 542)

Brown (as cited in Denzin et al., 2008) contends that this original epistemology "challenges the traditional meritocratic paradigm of the academy by attempting to subvert what are viewed as pretenses of 'objectivity,' 'neutrality,' 'meritocracy,' and 'color-blindness'" (p. 87). More specifically Pizarro (1998) reasons that a main source of knowledge in LatCrit comes from "a uniquely Chicana/o epistemology grounded in the pursuit of new knowledge that moves toward group empowerment" (p. 65) and is based in "love, family, and social justice" (p. 65).

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Scholars such as Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001), Solórzano and Yosso (2002), and Milner and Howard (2013) have determined how these counternarratives help to explain, argue, and illustrate the tenets available in CRT and the parameters for such a methodology. Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) maintain that the following five themes distinguish CRT methodology:

- "The centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination" (p. 312);

- CRT challenges stories of deficiency and other forms of dominant ideology such as "traditional claims of the educational system to objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity" (p. 313);

- "The commitment to social justice" (p. 313);

- "The centrality of experiential knowledge" (p. 314); and

- "The interdisciplinary perspective…analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods" (p. 314).

Each of these themes reverberates throughout the whole of the method and allows the researchers to "link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community" (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 312).

Though this study argues that counternarratives are compatible with a method of critical evocative portraiture, the systems for developing counternarratives are currently borrowed mostly from that of prescribed narrative inquiry. This includes "restorying"

which is a "framework…for gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story, and then rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence" (Merriam, 2009, p. 56). Creswell (2007) writes that narratives have "the elements of focusing on a single individual, constructing a study out of stories and epiphanies of special events, situating them within a broader context, and invoking the presence of the author in the study" (p. 88). Additionally, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write of five dimensions of narrative that meet John Dewey's notion of experience enveloped in "continuity and interaction" (p. 31). These include:

- Temporality- the idea that "any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future" (p. 29).

- Process- the notion "that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change…[and] it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process" (p. 30).

- Narrative sign- "In narrative thinking, an action is seen as a narrative sign" (p. 31) or an "expression" (p. 31) of the participant that must be explained and interpreted.

- Certainty- Narrative is never certain. One action may have several interpretations and each interpretation must "be treated as tentative" (p. 31) or with caution.

- Context- "Context is ever present. It includes such notions as temporal context, spatial context, and context of other people. Context is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing." (p. 32).

Finally, CRT counter-stories and narratives use the experiences of the researcher in interpretation. In narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the role of the "participant observer" (p. 9) writing,

> Always for learning to occur, the inquirer in this ambiguous, shifting, participant observation role is meeting difference; allowing difference to challenge assumptions, values, and beliefs; improvising and adapting to the difference; and thereby learning as the narrative anthropologist. (p. 9)

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) use the following to engage in the CRT methodological process: "(a) the data gathered from the research process itself, (b) the existing literature on the topic(s), (c) our own professional experiences, and (d) our own personal experiences" (p. 34). Milner and Howard (2013) equally use their "experiences in the field" (p. 537) to create their counternarratives.

Youth participatory action research (YPAR). Based in the work of Freire (1970), participatory action research (PAR) is defined "as the collection of information to bring about social change. In PAR, researchers work collectively with community members to derive questions, collect data, analyze, and implement results" (Nuñez-Janes & Robledo, 2009, p. 78). Similar to critical methods,

> the PAR tradition starts with concerns for power and powerlessness and aims to confront the way in which the established and power-holding elements of societies worldwide are favored because they hold a monopoly on the definition and employment of knowledge. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 269)

In this dynamically emergent method, participants hold the power and share it with the researcher as co-researchers. There is an "emphasis on local knowledge, social action, and a disruption of traditional research roles" (Nuñez-Janes & Robledo, 2009, p. 78).

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This aids in amplifying the social justice intentions of PAR to "produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people…[and] to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 269). Engaging participants—especially those marginalized by society—in research creates agency in that they maintain ownership of their knowledge throughout the inquiry process, further developing it to empower themselves and their community (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). In this way research becomes a liberatory process.

PAR "emphasizes the political aspects of knowledge production" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 269) where authentic relationships and collaboration are prized and "the knowledge and experience of people—often oppressed groups—is directly honored and valued" (p. 269). The researcher-researcher relationship produces power equity as opposed to the researcher-participant dynamic where participants' knowledge is viewed as an object of research. In this way, PAR positions "the academic knowledge of formally educated people…in a dialectical tension with the popular knowledge of the people" (p. 270). This dialogue "enhances problem formulation, hypothesis formulation, data acquisition, data analysis, synthesis, and application" (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkavy, 1993, p. 177) constructing a deeper understanding of the problem of research. Finally, according to Cammarota and Fine (2010), "PAR knowledge is active and not passive…research findings become launching pads for ideas, actions, plans, and strategies to initiate social change" (p. 6).

YPAR takes the process of PAR a step further and also focuses on the transformative resistant qualities of youth as they engage in a multi-generational research process that both creates "critical inquiry and action" (Cammarota & Fine, 2010, p. 4) while also stimulating youth development. In this way "research for resistance can be mobilized toward justice" (p. 4). This form of research allows youth to be active and transformative in their resistance and recognizes that youth have the "capacity and agency to analyze their own social context, to engage critical research collectively, and to challenge and resist the forces impeding their possibilities for liberation" (p. 4). This empowers youth to "see themselves as intelligent and capable" (p. 7), collectively developing their self-agency, navigational skills, and critical thinking capabilities.

Critical Evocative Portraiture. This method, developed by Lyman, Lazaridou, and Strachan (2014) takes the method of portraiture, created by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), and re-creates it by placing it within a critical frame with the intention of providing inspiration for action.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture "seek[s] to record and interpret the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions—their authority, knowledge, and wisdom." (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), portraitists

> seek to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor. The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. (p. 3)

It is "especially sensitive to deeper aspects of the individual" seeking "sources of inspiration and higher aspirations, and to subtler levels in experience and consciousness" (Witz, 2006, p. 246). Though it is known for its phenomenological qualities, it fuses to methods that allow it to move beyond "the phenomenology of subjective experience" by attempting "to understand this experience, with empathy and sympathy as part of the larger unity of the person of whom this experience forms a part" (p. 246). Interviewing for "attitudes, values, and whole experience" (p. 248), portraitists use rich narrative to seek the essence of the person and their experiences by capturing both the form, evolutionary properties, and aesthetic qualities of their participants' stories. The impetus behind each portrait is "to inform and inspire, to document and transform, to speak to the head and to the heart" (p. 243).

Like narratives, portraitists use a brush created within their own experiences, interpretations, thoughts, and creativity. They restory through the use of interpreted themes found to be constant throughout a participant's many experiences related to the phenomenon. Rather than "listen to a story…portraitists listen for a story" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p 13). Instead of taking a "passive, receptive stance in which one waits to absorb the information and does little to give it shape and form," portraitists take a "much more active, [and] engaged position in which one searches for the story, seeks it out, is central in its creation…helps to shape the story's coherence and aesthetic" (p. 12). Although the researcher is more present in portraiture than any other method, portraitists negotiate this "'humanistic' dimension" (p. 8) by paying "rigorous and systematic attention to the details of social reality and human experience" (p. 8). Through

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this method of art and science, a portrait representing the "aesthetic whole" (p. 241) is created.

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraits are shaped through a process of "relationship, context, emergent themes, voice, and coalescing aesthetic whole" (p. 35). Primary is the role of relationships. All portraits are a result of strong relationships where "access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of both reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed" (p. 135). Relationship is at the core of the portrait and predicts a portrait's authenticity (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Without a solid relationship between the researcher and the participant, the portraitist is unable to access and paint a valid depiction of the individual and her/his experiences.

Context is particularly important to portraiture because it allows the portraitist to interpret the person's emotions, thoughts, actions, and experiences. These mean nothing without placing them in "physical, geographic, temporal, historical, aesthetic" (p. 41) settings. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), "Context becomes the framework, the reference point, the map, the ecological sphere; it is used to place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say or do" (p. 41). In portraiture it is not only the context, however, that helps to shape the person, but the person that gives the context its shape (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The relationship between the context and the participant is a dialogue of sorts, each informs the other. For example, observing the state of a living room, such as unkept knickknacks, art on the walls, magazines laying opened on the couch, would give the researcher

symbolic clues as to how the participant "shape[d], disturb[ed], and transform[ed]" (p. 58) the room.

Coming to the data with her own "intellectual framework" (p.185), the portraitist uses "a disciplined, empirical process—of description, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis—and an aesthetic process of narrative development" (p. 185) to identify emerging themes. This "iterative and generative" (p. 185) process, though scientific and rigorous, is shaped primarily through the lens of the researcher. She decides the themes inherently from her point-of-view. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, this gives purpose to the portraitist "record[ing] her framework before she enters the field, identifying the intellectual, ideological, and autobiographical themes that will shape her view" (p. 186). Without this process the portraitist has no way of separating what she observes from what she thinks she observes.

Though the goal of a portrait is to illustrate the voice of the participants, voice in portraiture has more to do with the portraitist than is does the participant. "The portraitist's voice…is everywhere- overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors, and echoing through the central themes" (p. 85). According to Oscar Wilde (as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter" (p. 85). Therefore, every portrait in its way is autobiographical in the sense that the portraitist is the one who chooses how the participant will be represented in the final portrait.

The aesthetic whole is how the processes of relationships, context, emerging themes, and voice all "coalesce" (p. 243) or come together to create the final portrait. "In

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developing the aesthetic whole, we come face to face with the tensions inherent in blending art and science, analysis and narrative, description and interpretation, structure and texture" (p. 243). The goal in this phase of the portrait is to develop qualitative validity or authenticity. The portrait must resonate

> with the actors who see themselves reflected in the story, with the readers who will see no reason to disbelieve it, and with the portraitist herself, whose deep knowledge of the setting and self-critical stance allow her to see the 'truth value' in her work. (p. 247)

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis instruct that the process of coalescence is the result of tending to four dimensions in the data:

- "Conception, which refers to the development of the overarching story;

- Structure, which refers to the sequencing and layering of emergent themes that scaffold the story;

- Form, which reflects the movement of the narrative, the spinning of the tale; and

- Cohesion, which speaks about the unity and integrity of the piece" (p. 247).

Each dimension is layered upon the other to create, as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis would call it, "the weaving of the tapestry" (p. 247).

Lyman et al. (2014) takes Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) methodology and refracts it through Elliot Eisner's (1998) dimensions of educational criticism. These dimensions include "description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics" (Lyman et al., 2014, p. 260). To do this "a description of the leader's reality is drawn in visibly

accessible language using her own words" (p. 260). The portraitist or researcher then places each critical portrait into a theme that allows the portraitist to further evaluate and interpret the meaning of the critical portrait (p. 260). Though each portrait may contain several themes, making the choice to locate the portrait into one theme versus another helps to create the critical aspect of the process which, according to Eisner (as cited in Lyman et al, 2014), is "an art of saying useful things about complex and subtle objects and events so that others less sophisticated, or more sophisticated in different ways, can see and understand…every act of criticism is a reconstruction" (p. 260). In the end Lyman et al. hope to assist readers in developing states of "empathy, and feelings of inspiration" (p. 261) while also challenging them to critique those feelings.

    Rationale for critical case study portraiture (CCSP). This unique methodology allowed the researcher to define the case to be studied not only within a successful and authentic parent/student activist organization, but also through the phenomenology of racially-minoritized parents and students. This multi-method approach used the combined strengths of each method to allow the researcher to fully describe and interpret the parents' and students' storied experiences as told through their authentic voices. These critical portraits interrogated the institutional racialized scripts described by the dominant literature regarding racially-minoritized parents and students. Finally, this dynamic and dialectical approach permitted this research to become a liberatory experience in itself by empowering parents and students through their active participation in research as social justice praxis.

The primary strength in this method is the combination of counternarratives through portraits. Though critical race methodology relies on counternarratives rooted in the tradition of narrative inquiry, CCSP uses both the critical pedagogy within these narratives and the anti-hegemonic stories themselves to act as a sketch to frame and structure the rich description required in each critical portrait. This is what gave the critical portrait its liberatory shape allowing it to create a critically informed dialogue with the dominant scripts. More than just storytelling, the portrait embraced both the heart of the lived experience and the essence of the parents and students, endowing both with the power of resistance. In the end, it became an abstract argument made real through the critical portraits.

In contrast to each of the methods' strengths in enhancing the critical portrait, these methods also worked together to alleviate the weaknesses found independently in each. The greatest weakness in both critical race methodology and portraiture is the power held by the storyteller or the portraitist. Though each method seeks to control this through scientific rigor and member checks, the autobiographical dimension continues to loom over both methods. The only way to remedy this power dynamic was to make the participants also the researchers, empowering their voice in every aspect of the completed critical portrait. Pizarro (1998) argues this as well, writing, "To counter our own ignorance and bias as researchers, we must integrate into our research rigorous and systematic joint analysis with our participants" (p. 61).

Additionally, the YPAR dimension of CCSP allowed the study to both reflect upon and argue for empowerment and liberation, while maintaining this action in the

design itself. This methodology created its own social justice praxis. This is in response to Delgado-Gaitan (as cited in Pizarro, 1998), who writes, "Not only do we need research on empowerment, but research as empowerment" (p. 61). Together, every aspect of the critical portrait sought to describe, interpret, argue, and empower. Though the methods individually would produce one or two of these elements, together they are charged with the full strength of social justice.

Research Design and Analysis

   Sampling method and participants. This study used an analytic case-study sample that was used to satisfy an "analytic generalization" (Yin, 2018, p. 21) where the goal of the research was "to expand and generalize theories" (p. 21). This is opposed to "statistical generalization" (p. 37) where an "inference is made about a population (or universe) on the basis of empirical data collected from a sample from that universe" (p. 37). This case study is "generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (p. 20). The next two sections both define and bound this case.

   Defining the case. The parameters of this case were defined within a successful and authentic activist organization that was organized for educational justice.

- Successful was operationalized as demonstrating influence on education practices and/or policies to further educational justice.
- Authentic was operationalized as an organization organized and run by a majority of under-resourced parents and students of color.

   Along with studying the organization and those participating in it, an equal number of parents and students were selected for individual interviews and critical

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portraits. According to Creswell (2007), narratives concentrate on one or two individuals, while a phenomenology generally focuses on five to twenty-five participants. For this study the researcher selected eight individuals to compare, and identified these participants with the aid of PJU, the chosen successful and authentic parent and student activist organization. To successfully answer the research question, these individuals possessed the following trait:

- Current student or parent, as defined by this study, who participates or has participated in a successful and authentic parent and student activist organization focused on educational justice for racially-minoritized low-income students.

For the purpose of this research, parent and student were defined by the following:

- Parent was defined as an adult who is responsible or has been responsible for the well-being of a student.

- Student was defined as a young person who is currently attending an elementary, middle, or secondary school. This definition includes adults who became a member of a successful and authentic parent/student activist organization while still in school, and youth who dropped out of school in the past five years.

Bounding the case. These eight parents and students were current members of PJU, a successful and authentic parent and student organization focused on educational justice in Denver, Colorado and throughout the state of Colorado.

Data collection and analysis. The rationale to include the following data sources are based on the opinion of Saldaña and Omasta (2018) who write, "If the goal for inquiry is to learn about people's histories, experiences, motivations, opinions, perspectives, feelings, and so on, then interviews, observations, and the participant's own writings can reveal deep meanings and interpretations" (p. 146). Figure 3.3 will illustrate the multiple data sources that were used in this study.

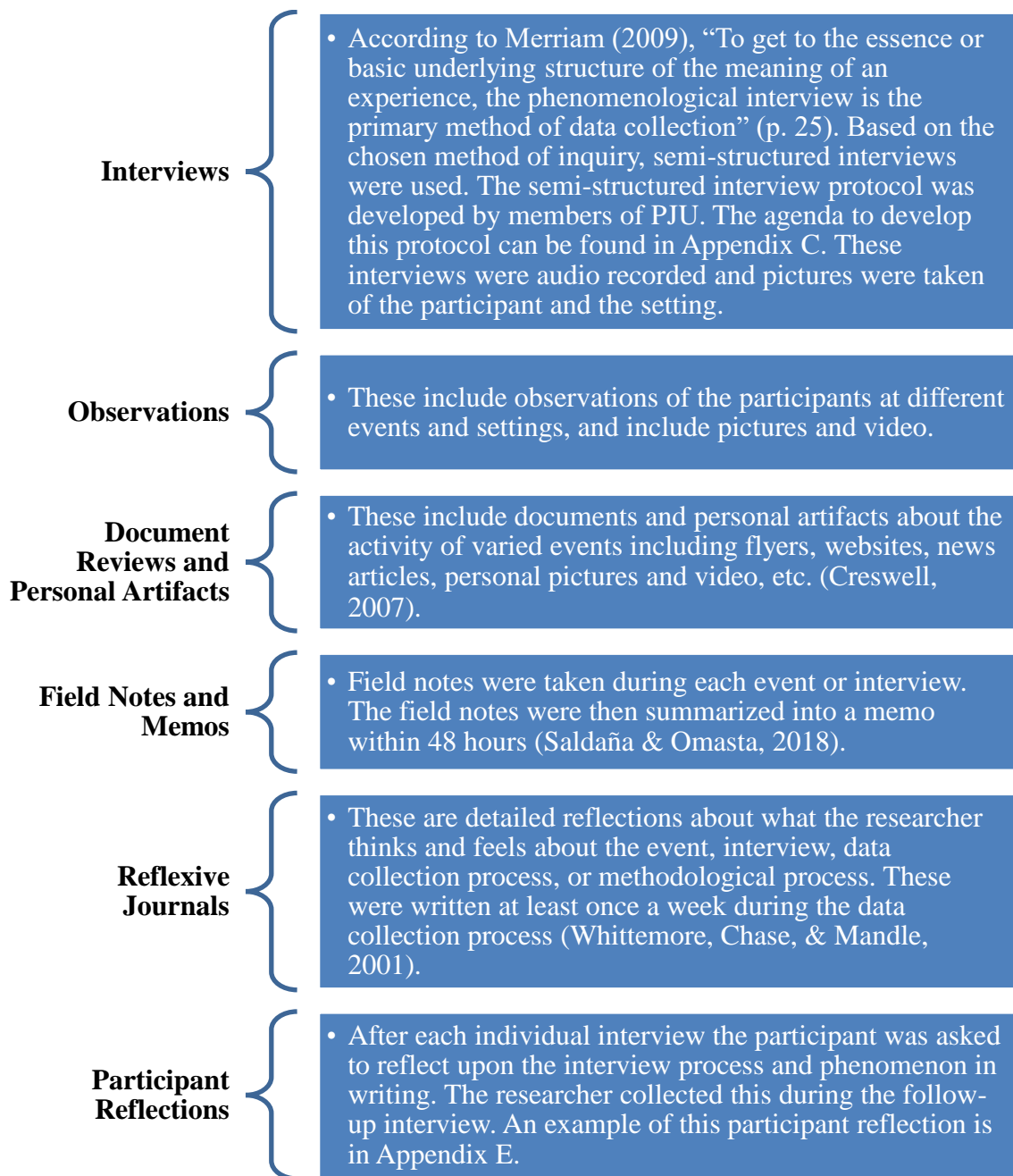|	
Interviews	• According to Merriam (2009), "To get to the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection" (p. 25). Based on the chosen method of inquiry, semi-structured interviews were used. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed by members of PJU. The agenda to develop this protocol can be found in Appendix C. These interviews were audio recorded and pictures were taken of the participant and the setting.
Observations	• These include observations of the participants at different events and settings, and include pictures and video.
Document Reviews and Personal Artifacts	• These include documents and personal artifacts about the activity of varied events including flyers, websites, news articles, personal pictures and video, etc. (Creswell, 2007).
Field Notes and Memos	• Field notes were taken during each event or interview. The field notes were then summarized into a memo within 48 hours (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).
Reflexive Journals	• These are detailed reflections about what the researcher thinks and feels about the event, interview, data collection process, or methodological process. These were written at least once a week during the data collection process (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).
Participant Reflections	• After each individual interview the participant was asked to reflect upon the interview process and phenomenon in writing. The researcher collected this during the follow-up interview. An example of this participant reflection is in Appendix E.

Figure 3.3. Data sources that provided data points throughout the data collection process.

Organization, Analysis, and Timeline of Study

The organization, interview schedule, and steps for analysis are reviewed chronologically below.

1. A successful and authentic parent/student activist organization was first identified. The researcher first ensured that the organization met the criteria by assessing public documents of the organization (i.e. website, reports, news articles) and met with the group's leadership to understand the relevant background of the group. This Leadership Team Protocol is available in Appendix F. The group selected was PJU. Once selected, PJU's Co-Executive Director wrote a letter of support and understanding that enabled the organization to participate in the research. This occurred in August of 2018.

2. The research was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board (DU IRB) in October of 2018.

3. From this point on all Design Team Workshops, Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocols and study documents were translated into Spanish by a University of Denver certified translator who had experience in the community. This translator not only translated but also helped interpret the meaning and essence of all communication of Spanish speaking participants and co-researchers. PJU identified eight participants for individual interviews (four spoke Spanish only), four staff for individual staff interviews, and five members/staff as co-researchers for Design Team Workshops. Upon identification (prospective participants filled out the study questionnaire

available in Appendix G) the researcher officially recruited the participants by calling or texting them. The translator contacted all participants who spoke Spanish only. Participants and co-researchers were selected only if they met the criteria specified. They were then chosen on a first-come-first-serve basis. PJU did not know the identities of the final participants chosen for the individual interviews. The Consent Form (Appendix B) was explained by the researcher to each participant and co-researcher and signed and dated, documenting that they agreed to participate in the study. Participants and co-researchers under age 18 signed the form and included the signature of a legal guardian. All participants and co-researchers were over the age of 13 so an Assent Form, though available, was not needed. This explanation and Consent Form were translated into Spanish. Parents and students were only be able to join the study once the Consent Form was signed and dated with the required signatures. This occurred from October 2018 to March 2019.

4. PJU invited the researcher to trainings, rallies, and other organizational events. This included going to Leadville, CO where the researcher observed a PJU Chapter Youth Meeting and interviewed two students. Organizational documents, such as the PJU website and Leadership Ladder, were analyzed. After attending PJU events, all related information and artifacts were also analyzed. This included pictures and videos of events. This information was used to create the organizational portrait. This occurred from October 2018 to March 2019.

5. Design Team Workshop #1. This workshop first helped to develop rapport between the researcher and PJU members and explore areas of inquiry. The members who participated were considered co-researchers. Design Team Workshop #1 served to develop the first Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol. In this group setting, moderated by the researcher, co-researchers reflected on the study's problem of research, research question, theoretical framework, and methodology. This allowed both the co-researchers and the researcher to develop a Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol collaboratively. This process aided in balancing the power dynamics usually affecting the quality of interviews (Kvale, 2006; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Four PJU members/staff participated in this Design Team Workshop #1: one parent, two students, and one staff member. All aspects of the Design Team #1 were translated into Spanish. One co-researcher spoke Spanish only. The other co-researchers spoke both Spanish and English fluently. Design Team #1 lasted three hours and occurred December 8, 2018. Design Team Workshop #1 Protocol and worksheets can be found in Appendix C.

6. Semi-structured Individual Interview #1. The researcher used the Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol (Appendix D) developed in the Design Team Workshop #1 to interview each individual member participant. Part I of the Protocol was asked during this interview. This interview averaged 60 minutes. Eight members participated in these individual interviews. These included four students and four parents. All of the parents spoke Spanish only,

while all of the students spoke Spanish and English fluently. Three of the co-researchers who participated in the Design Team Workshop #1 and #2 also participated in the individual interviews (one parent and two students). All interviews were conducted in Spanish when needed. The interviews were audio recorded, and pictures were taken of the participant and her/his surroundings. The researcher asked all participants to provide a pseudonym for themselves that was used in the study. From this point on, all data collected from individual members was coded with this pseudonym. A Participant Reflection Form (Appendix E) was given to each participant, explained, and the researcher asked the participant to fill it out before the next interview. This was available in both Spanish and English. The interview was then transcribed (by a certified translator and transcriber when needed) within 48 hours of the interview and the transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative data management system Dedoose. The interviews were then coded using in vivo and thematic methods (Saldaña, 2016). Within the 48 hours the audio recorder was kept in a locked safe. Once the interview was transcribed the audio recordings were deleted from their original device and stored on the University of Denver's One Drive (this was more secure because the University of Denver secures it). If a professional transcriber was used the audio recordings were transferred to that person using the University of Denver's transfer program software. Any passwords needed were communicated over the phone instead of emailed. The audio recordings were

transferred to the researcher's paid Dropbox account once they were properly

encrypted using encryption software. Translators and transcribers signed a

non-disclosure agreement acknowledging that they understood that all

identifiable data needed to remain confidential. No identifiable data (other

than the participants voices) was recorded or used in the transcriptions. The

audio recording was only kept in One Drive and the encrypted Dropbox. No

other storage was used. These will be destroyed or deleted once the study is

completed. Field notes were taken, memos, and reflexive journals were

created (all of these used pseudonyms in relation to any participant

information). Any observations, documents and personal artifacts were

analyzed and added to the data. Initial themes were identified by the

researcher and recorded in a way that was easily accessible to the participant.

These individual interviews were used to create the critical portraits. The

Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocols can be found in Appendix D.

These occurred from December 2018 to February 2019.

7. Staff Interviews. Four staff members were individually interviewed, and the

data was handled similarly to the individual interviews. One of the four staff

members interviewed also participated in Design Team #1 as a co-researcher.

Each transcript and analysis were member checked. A synthesis of the staff

interviews was developed to create the organizational portrait. The final

organizational portrait was sent to the staff for their reflections and to check

facts. The Staff Interview Protocols can be found in Appendix F. These occurred in December 2018.

8. Semi-structured Individual Interview #2. Part II of the Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol (Appendix D) was asked during this interview. The participant also reviewed her/his transcript of Interview #1 to ensure accuracy. This interview averaged 60 minutes. All eight individual participants participated in this interview. The first Participant Reflection Form (Appendix E) was retrieved from the participant and another was given after the interview. Secondary themes were recorded, other sources of data were combined and coded, and a rough sketch of the critical portrait was created by the researcher. Each of the parent sketches were translated into Spanish. This interview was handled similarly to Semi-structured Individual Interview #1. These individual interviews were used to create the critical portraits. These occurred from January to February 2019.

9. Semi-structured Individual Interview #3. The participant read and reflected on the rough sketch of their portrait. All participants were sent their rough sketches by email a week ahead of time for initial review (participants were also notified of the email via text). All of the parents' rough sketches were translated into Spanish. The rough sketches were read out loud at each of the interviews. The parents' sketches were read out loud in Spanish by the translator. A hard copy of the sketch was also given to each of the participants (all of the parents' copies were in Spanish and English). Participants also

reviewed her/his transcript from Interview #2 for accuracy. This interview averaged 60 minutes. Parents and students were able to take the sketch after the interview and continue to give the researcher feedback via email or through the translator up to a week after the interview. During this interview the transcription, coding, and emergent themes went through an in-depth process of member checking. All of the data was reviewed and discussed with individual participants. Each participant was asked if she/he observed additional themes in the data or had any further questions for the researcher. Follow-up questions were asked based on the initial themes discovered by the researcher (these included questions about emotions, choices, history, and secondary thoughts about events). This interview was handled similarly to Semi-structured Individual Interviews #1 and #2. The second Participant Reflection Form (Appendix D) was retrieved from the participant. All sources of data were then combined and coded and the final portrait was created by the researcher. All final parent portraits were translated into Spanish and the final portrait was then emailed to each of the participants. Each participant was given a timeline of two weeks to comment or make additional changes. Once these were all complete a comparative coding process occurred where parent portraits were compared to other parent portraits and student portraits were compared to other student portraits. Finally, parent and student portraits were then compared together. Initial themes were developed from these comparisons. This occurred in February 2019.

10. Design Team Workshop #2. Once all of the portraits were complete the

    researcher compiled them together for presentation to the co-researchers of

    Design Team Workshop #2. The four co-researchers were comprised of two

    students, one parent, and one community member. One parent spoke Spanish

    only and all other co-researchers spoke Spanish and English fluently. One

    parent and two students were also part of the Individual Interviews. After

    teaching the group how to code the portraits (see Protocol in Appendix C), the

    researcher gave each co-researcher two critical portraits to read and code

    (concept, descriptive, and simultaneous coding). All of the parents' portraits

    were translated into Spanish so they could be read in Spanish if needed.

    Pseudonyms were used for each portrait so the co-researchers could not

    identify the participants. Though no names were used these portraits may have

    been partially identifiable due to their rich description of each participant.

    This was a risk that was covered in the Consent Form. Once completed, the

    group came back together to share their codes. The entire group then did an

    overall tertiary coding by taking the codes and placing them within

    identifiable themes that emerged from the data. After the themes were

    developed the group discussed the themes and the findings of the data. Using

    the field notes from the day and the notes of the group (taken on large

    presentation paper), the researcher compared the co-researchers' themes with

    the researcher's initial themes and used the composite themes to organize the

    portraits. The researcher then used the notes discussing the findings to help

inform the final findings or discussion section of this study. This Workshop

was designed to last three hours, but, in the end, lasted four and a half hours

due to the co-researchers' deep discussion and desire to keep working. The

Design Team Workshop #2 agenda and worksheets are available in Appendix

C. This occurred March 9, 2019.

11. Research Use. An Executive Summary (also available in Spanish) and a copy

of the final research dissertation will be given to PJU electronically. The

researcher will use a condensed form of the research for publication in a

journal and will present the research at several academic conferences. The

dissertation will then be published in ProQuest Dissertations. The researcher,

with help from some of the co-researchers, will present the finalized research

to PJU. This will occur in the fall of 2019.

Confidentiality and Other Ethical Considerations

Before participants or co-researchers were able to join any portion of the study, a

Consent Form (Appendix B) was explained and given to them in writing. If the

participants preferred to communicate in Spanish, a Consent Form was provided and

explained in Spanish as well. Once the Consent Form was explained, participants and co-

researchers signed the form, acknowledging that they understood it, and agreed to

participate in the study. Legal guardians signed the form of participants and co-

researchers under the age of 18 (Consent Forms for legal guardian were also provided in

Spanish). None of the participants or co-researchers were under the age of 13 so an

Assent Form, though available, was not needed.

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Within the Consent Form, and at the beginning of every interview, the researcher assured individual participants and co-researchers that their confidentiality would be held to the maximum standard possible. Due to the detailed nature of the critical portraits, however, reported data may have included partially identifiable descriptions of the participants. This was exacerbated by the fact that PJU would be named in the study and there were only eight parent/student participants and four staff participants. This was approved by both DU's IRB and PJU and made clear in the risk section of the Consent Form. This section was explained explicitly. Though this was the case for all participants, only the researcher had access to the actual identities of the participants. These real identities were held in the strictest confidence. After the first individual interview, participants were asked to provide a pseudonym. This pseudonym was used to identify all information gained from the participant during the research process, presentations, and in any future publications. The interviews were transcribed (by a certified translator and transcriber when needed) within 48 hours. Within the 48 hours the audio recorder was kept in a locked safe. Once the interview was transcribed the audio recordings were deleted from their original device and stored on the University of Denver's One Drive. If a professional transcriber was used, the audio recordings were transferred to that person using the University of Denver's transfer program software. Any passwords needed were communicated over the phone instead of emailed. The audio recordings were transferred to the researcher's paid Dropbox account once they were properly encrypted using encryption software. Other than the participant's voice no identifiable data was recorded. The audio recordings, pictures of the participants, and video of events were only kept in

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One Drive and the researcher's encrypted Dropbox. These will be destroyed or deleted after the study is completed. No identifiable data, except for the participants' images, was connected to the pictures or videos. Every form of data was also labeled under the pseudonym provided. The researcher provided the participants with her phone number and email (as well as the name, number, and email of the researcher's dissertation adviser) in case they had any questions about the consent or confidentiality at any time. All were also notified that they were welcome to exit from the study at any time. All completed Consent Forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's house and will be destroyed after five years.

With a primary goal of engaging diverse participants, the researcher ensured that all qualified participants felt welcome and were able to participate fully in the study. This included, but was not limited to, participants who were from various races and ethnicities, identified as LGBTQ, had visible or invisible disabilities, had legal citizenship status concerns, or spoke Spanish. The researcher accommodated any and all needs that needed to be met to ensure the full participation of every participant in the study. This included but was not limited to providing a translator and documents written in Spanish, transportation, and/or meeting in a place that was accessible the participant.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability. This is referred to as the "stability' of the findings" (Whittemore et al., 2002, p. 523). This researcher met reliability standards by audio recording and transcribing all interviews. Accuracy in these transcriptions was achieved by having the participant read her/his transcribed interview (transcribed in Spanish when needed) and

correct it for any errors. Transcription was done directly by a certified translator/transcriber when needed. Additionally, all data was coded using in vivo, concept, descriptive, simultaneous, and thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) within a qualitative data management system called Dedoose. The researcher engaged participants to review the codes for accuracy and to ensure the themes were constructed reasonably from the available codes.

Validity. Due to the qualitative nature of this study an alternative to the traditionalist positive definition of validity was used (Whittemore et al., 2001). According to Whittemore et al. (2001), "Reflexivity, open inquiry, and critical analysis of all aspects of inquiry contribute to validity in qualitative research" (p. 531). Instead of validity, this study held its findings to standards in credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity (Whittemore et al., 2001). The next few sections will explain these standards and what action the researcher took in meeting them.

Credibility. Whittemore et al. (2001) write, "Assuring credibility refers to the conscious effort to establish confidence in an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data…assurance that interpretations are trustworthy and reveal some truth external to the investigator's experience" (p. 530). To do this, it was first important to understand that both the researcher and CRT "recognize the experiential knowledge of People of Color as credible, highly valuable, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in all of its facets" (Milner & Howard, 2013, p. 539). The researcher also furthered the credibility of this study by extensively engaging with co-researchers twice as a group and participants three times as individuals for collaboration,

interviews, member checks, coding, and presentations. During this time, the researcher

built trust, began to understand the participants' culture and check "for misinformation

that stems from distortions introduced by the researcher or informants" (Creswell, 2007,

p. 207). This allowed the researcher to ensure that "the explanation fits the description"

and "the research reflect[ed] the experience of the participants…in a believable way"

(Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 530). Credibility was also achieved through attending

organizational events and assessing organizational artifacts.

   Authenticity. This is to ensure that the "portrayal of research…reflects the

meaning and experiences that are lived and perceived by the participants" (Whittemore et

al., 2001, p. 530). Authenticity ran deeply throughout this research. According to Santana

(2016), portraiture "demands authenticity" (p. 7) through its rich description of the

participants. This research also used multiple perspectives of a phenomenon and several

levels of detailed member checks to continually account for authenticity throughout data

collection and analysis.

   Criticality. This determines how well the research shows "evidence of critical

appraisal" (Whittemore et al, 2001, p. 531) of the researcher and participants. According

to Creswell (2007) it is imperative that researchers demonstrate criticality by "clarifying

research bias from the outset" (p. 208). This is evidenced in the positionality section of

this chapter where the researcher created an autobiographical portrait using four

narratives that analyzed her "past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that

have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (p. 208).

Integrity. According to Whittemore et al. (2001), this standard is met "if investigators are self-critical and seek integrity at each phase of inquiry" (p. 531). To ensure this, it is important that "researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). This researcher triangulated data using eight different data sources and the participants themselves (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). These included interviews, observations, document reviews, personal artifacts, field notes, memos, reflexive journals, and participant reflections. In addition, PJU members were engaged as co-researchers and participants participated in several levels of members checks throughout the study. Finally, to create a high degree of integrity, a complex methodology and conceptual model were used.

Limitations

Subjectivity and intentional bias. There is a distinction between subjectivity and intentional bias. Subjectivity occurs when a researcher is not objective in her findings. After putting the data through rigorous scientific processes, the researcher interprets the end results through a lens tinted with her own values, beliefs, and experiences. It is "the personal, subjective way people perceive and respond to social experiences…the signature way a researcher's unique mind constructs the meanings of action, reaction, and interaction" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018, p. 142). One could argue that no social science research can truly be objective in the sense that people cannot be fully controlled and the researched findings will always be mitigated by a person with thoughts and feelings of their own (Whittemore et al., 2001). The researcher's unique perspective, as documented

in her positionality, reflects the ways her subjectivity may have presented itself in the research.

This research is intentionally subjective in that a social justice project can never be objective because it is interrogating and "pointing out the bias and subjective formulae of the majoritarian story" (Yosso, 2006, p. 4) and is based on the personal experiences of racially-minoritized people. Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (as cited in Gutiérrez-Jones, 2001) argue, "Scholarship about race in America can never be written from a distance of detachment or with an attitude of objectivity" (p. 82). Pizzaro (1998) continues this argument writing that research that centralizes race like CRT "challenges the epistemology underlying the academy as it suggests that justice is a more essential measure of the strength of research than is objectivity" (p. 63). Freire (1970) finds it imperative, however, that "there is a dialectical relation between the subjective and the objective" (p. 15). To this end, the researcher continuously ran all data through rigorous systems of data processing in order to ensure that any subjective frames were also grounded in the data.

This subjectivity does, however, create a challenge to the research in that the researcher does not share a racially-minoritized status with her participants. Due to this, the researcher inevitably brought a dominant lens to this study. Though this was mitigated as much as possible by including a great deal of personal reflection, "rigorous procedures and methodological tools" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13), critique and reflection with racially-minoritized individuals, and by making participants co-researchers in the study, the researcher's voice could not be completely eliminated.

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Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) explain, "The portraitist's voice, then, is everywhere-overarching and undergirding the text, framing the piece, naming the metaphors, and echoing through the central themes" (p. 85). Therefore, no matter how much mitigation occurred, the researcher's voice as a white woman in a white-dominated society continued to be part of the developed portraits and the findings of this research.

Intentional bias is different than subjectivity in that it is deliberate prejudice. According to Merriam-webster.com, bias in research is the "systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others." This researcher has committed herself to the scientific process as determined through qualitative methods and in doing so met the standards for qualitative reliability and validity. This commitment to the research process eliminated intentional bias.

Positionality: Autobiographical Portrait. The following is an autobiographical portrait of the researcher. This is included to both document the researcher's unique values, beliefs, and thoughts as created through her experiences and to also allow the researcher to reflect on these herself as she entered into the data collection phase of this study.

Stefanie. Stefanie is 42-year-old Greek-American woman. She has been married to her husband Charles for ten years and has a son and a step-son who are both in their mid-twenties. She lives in Aurora, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. Stefanie had her son at nineteen and raised him as a single mother until her son was ten. When her son was a year old Stefanie enrolled at Arapahoe Community College. After earning her associate degree, she attended Metropolitan State University of Denver where she double-majored

in history and Chicano studies with an honor's program emphasis. After receiving her bachelor's degree, she took a position as a middle school English and Social Studies teacher at a Denver charter school on the westside of Denver. The charter school had a focus on both academics and social services and focused on middle and high school students who were not successful in school or had dropped out. After returning to school to earn her master's degree in special education with an emphasis in affective needs from the University of Colorado at Denver, Stefanie became the special education coordinator at the charter school and its affiliated day treatment program. Soon after she also became the Academic Dean of the school. After working for the charter school and earning her Colorado principal's license from the Ritchie Program at the University of Denver, Stefanie became the Director of Student Engagement at the Denver Public Schools where she spearheaded several projects to prevent dropout and re-engage students who had already dropped out of school. One of these projects was the development and implementation of three Multiple Pathway schools in Denver. These were small middle/high schools intended to help students who struggled in school stay in school and graduate. After founding this type of school in the Denver area, Stefanie became the founding principal at one of the Multiple Pathway schools. After her time at this school she opened her own educational consultancy firm, working with various schools, school districts, non-profits, and foundations.

Who are you? "What is your name?" asked the professor.

"It is Ioanna," I replied.

"How do you spell that?"

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"I-O-A-N-N-A. Like I-O Anna"

"Hmm…I don't have an Ioanna on my class list."

"My name is Stefanie but I go by Ioanna."

With this I lied. My middle name was Iona, but I never went by that name until that day. I changed the spelling because I was named after my Pro Yai Yai (great-grandmother), but my parents spelled her name wrong. So that day, my first day of college, I decided to reclaim it. Letting the world know I was Greek American was important to me. I suppose people could tell my heritage by my last name of Vassilaros, but in Colorado everyone assumed I was Latina and would pronounce it Vassilaroz. Embracing my Pro Yai Yai's name in this way made me feel unique and closer to her. For an entire semester, complete strangers knew me as Ioanna. After this I returned to my own name. Going by another person's name became exhausting and instead of being liberating it just seemed like I was being fake.

If I am to be honest with myself, I am really only a quarter Greek American on my father's side. The rest of me is German, French, and Hungarian. In terms of the census, I am a white American. It was not until I became an adult however, that I claimed this as an identity. My pride, like my dark hair and olive skin, was in my Greekness. Both my brother, sister, and I look like my father. And my father looked like my Papu (grandfather), who was born in Greece. My green-eyed, light-haired mother would be stopped in the grocery store by people who would inquire if we were adopted. Though my appearance separated me from the other kids I grew up with (mostly white kids) and half of my family, I was proud of my differences. Listening to my Papu speak Greek, I

could imagine an existence where I too was from Greece. Though he never taught my father the language, I thought that one day I might be able to learn it. The only Greek I did learn, however, was "I love you," "good night," "good morning," "black eye," and "big mouth." Hardly the vocabulary of someone who could become fluent in it. In high school I took Russian because it was the only language taught using the Cyrillic alphabet. In this way I felt closer to my ancestors.

Though I am also very close to my mother's parents and family, and love them very much, I never claimed her heritage. She is "Pennsylvania Dutch," meaning that she is of German ancestry, living in Western Pennsylvania. According to my family (though I know the actual reason for this is much more complicated), people in the area heard German immigrants speaking German and for some reason thought they were speaking Dutch, thus the term. Though I felt part of my family, I knew that my Papap (grandfather) saw my father as something other than white. Everyone laughs at the story of my Papap "sicking" the dog on my father the first time he came to the house. Though I know he did this probably in jest, I came to understand what racism was from my Papap.

My Papap. Laying my head down on my Grandma's lap, I could feel the rough hair on her bare legs. It was summer in Pennsylvania and she wore tan shorts and a short-sleeved knit top. I was twelve and was, along with my little brother, visiting both my Grandma and my Papap for the summer. After the long summer days of swimming in the pool and playing cards, she and I would sit on the small front porch overlooking the street. We talked about many things, but this was a conversation I had played over and over in my head many times.

"Can I tell you something?" I asked timidly.

"Of course," she said, "you can always tell me anything."

"I'll tell you, but you can't tell Papap. Ok?"

"I won't," she said as she leaned back in her seat a bit. I still had my head on her lap and was staring across the porch at a small planter with flowers. I don't remember what kind. Only that they were red.

"I met a boy," I said, "and he's black." The words seemed to rush out of me like air being released from a balloon.

"Oh," she said pausing. "Is he nice?"

"Yes, but I know what Papap would think."

"As long as he is nice…that is all that matters," she replied, ending the conversation.

I knew that was not all that mattered. Without being told by anyone I knew that marrying a boy, or even dating a boy who was black was not something I was supposed to do. The notion of it was a belief, or maybe even a core value passed on to me without words. It was symbolized by my Papap. Though not the only racist in my family, he was definitely the loudest about his feelings toward "blacks."

One time, among the many times my Papap visited us in Colorado, my mother showed him the murals she had stenciled on my brother's bedroom wall. My brother loved sports, so she had skillfully painted the logos of Major League Baseball (MLB) and the National Basketball Association (NBA) as large stencils on his walls. My Papap loved the MLB logo, but when he came to the NBA logo beside my brother's bed, he

looked at my brother, and over a bit of laughter said, "Alex, who's that monkey up on your wall?" He thought it was funny and continued laughing as he left the room. My mother, brother, and I just stared at him, and then each other in silence. I wasn't sure what to say. I knew he was joking, but that wasn't a funny joke. We all left the bedroom in silence, and no one said a word to him about it.

I asked my mother about his jokes and stories a few times. She said that he said those things because he came from a "different time." When I got a bit older, I finally told myself that it didn't matter what "time" he came from. It wasn't right!

On another summer trip we took to my grandparents' house, I stepped into their large kitchen where my grandma and my aunts were playing cards on the long oak kitchen table. My Papap and my uncle were standing by the counter drinking homemade root beer. My cousins, who were still very little, were chasing each other through the kitchen and into the living room. All of the adults were listening to my Papap tell another racist joke. I can't even remember what it was. I just remember the laughter. Instead of listening to it, I walked out of the room. After everyone had left, I walked slowly down the hall and stairs into the living room where I found him watching the Pirates game on television.

Again, it was a conversation I had played over and over in my head. And again, like a balloon releasing its air, I said loudly and quickly, "The jokes you tell aren't funny. They're mean and racist and I hate them. If you keep telling them and saying other racist things in front of me, I'm never going to speak to you again."

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Expecting him to say something, I braced myself for what would happen next. My Papap was known to be quick tempered. Instead of saying something in response however, he just stared at me silently, and after a few moments averted his attention back to the game. I turned around quickly and raced out of the room.

The next day was like every other day. I swam in the swimming pool, fell asleep on the couch next to him watching baseball, and played cards. Though I knew he never changed his mind about African Americans and I knew he continued to tell racist jokes and comments in front of his other grandchildren, he never again said them around me.

Finding a Home. Upon arriving at my academic advisor's office on the second floor of the Central building, I was surprised by the darkness of the room. It was a small office that was only big enough for one desk and a short book shelf. Knocking on the opened door an elderly man with salt-n-pepper hair and thick rimless glasses peered out at me. He smiled briefly and asked me to have a seat. I sat in the only chair available. He left the door open because closing it would make the space much smaller and darker than it already was. His light skin and brown eyes were only illuminated by a small desk lamp among several stacks of paper.

"So…what do you want to do with your life?" he said without introducing himself.

A bit nervously I said, "I want to be a social studies teacher."

Turning his back to shuffle some papers he replied, "Well you'll never find a job doing that."

"What? What do you mean I'll never find a job? I thought they needed teachers."
I said haltingly with surprise.

He looked back at me, "They do…science teachers and math teachers. Everyone
wants to be a social studies teacher, but in order to get a job in social studies you need to
be a coach. Can you coach a sport?"

"No." I said with disbelief.

"So why don't you do yourself a favor and major in math or science."

I began to feel my face turn hot. He was the latest in a line of men throughout my
life who told me that I couldn't do it, or I wasn't good enough.

"Because I don't want to major in math or science," I said flatly. "Thank you for
your time."

With that I stood up and walked out of his office. He sat back with surprise but
did not try to stop me. I closed his door and walked back down the hall, down the stairs,
and out of the building.

I was relieved to be outside. Away from the conversation and away from the dark
little office. "Who does he think he is?" I thought angrily.

My thoughts became lost with the heat of the sun. Stopping momentarily in the
shade of a large apple tree in the middle of campus, I decided that I was not going to go
home yet. I had only been to the campus one other time, and still having an hour and a
half left on my parking meter, I was anxious to explore. Looking down at a pamphlet I
had received from the registrar a few days before, I found a map of the campus. I was
across the street from the Auraria Library and next to a food cart selling burritos. Because

it was June, the campus was deserted. Looking west, I saw a long, lawned corridor. At the end of the passage loomed a large pink stucco church with four steeples. Intrigued by the awesomeness of it, I began walking toward it. Getting closer it seemed to be magnified among the rest of the standard brick buildings on campus.

The sign on the front of the church lawn read, "St. Cajetens Center." Walking up the steep white stairs to the front doors I felt like I was transported to another time. I could imagine little girls playing in their Sunday dresses at the bottom of the stairs, while families from the nearby Chicano neighborhood rushed past them to be on time for services. Completely forgetting about my disappointing meeting, I was entranced with this incredible piece of history and wondered how it could have become part of a college campus.

Finally reaching the top of the stairs, I was disappointed to find the large oak doors locked. Deciding to try a back door I went around the southside of the building. To my delight, I found two more buildings that struck my interest and temporarily diverted my attention from the church. On the southside of the church was a small, Victorian brick house. Next to it was a late 19th century brick duplex. The sign on the house read "Rectory Building," while the sign in front of the duplex read "Golda Meir House." For a person who loves history this was an exciting find. I felt like I had found some form of treasure. And this on a college campus!

Suddenly the Rectory's door opened, and a young Latina emerged. Rushing down the sidewalk toward the parking lot, she let the door swing shut behind her. My curiosity

piqued with the fact that there were now people around who could answer questions. I

needed to know more about this historic landmark.

Opening the squeaky door of the Rectory building, I was surprised to find an

office poured into the front rooms. Though the space was small, it was cozy. To the right

of the door was a corkboard that had several flyers announcing various campus events.

Vibrantly colored *papel picado* banners were hung across the windows. Not too far from

the door was a wooden desk.

"Can I help you?" said a man in a loud sing-song voice.

"Um…Hi! I'm a new student here and was just wondering what this is all about?"

I said quickly.

"This is the Chicano Studies Department darling" he said coming from around the

desk with a warm welcoming smile. He was a large Chicano man in his mid-forties.

Though he showed his age in his salt-n-pepper goatee, black framed glasses, and small

pony tail that captured only the back thin wisps of his hair, he was youthful in his

fashion. In both ears he wore gold stud and hooped earrings and his red baggy shirt hung

over his jeans. From his belt hung a silver chain that looped from his belt loop to what I

assumed was his wallet. He had tremendous energy and I liked him right away.

"I'm Harold!" he said extending both his hands to shake mine.

Before I knew it, he was calling someone else into the room. "Elliana!" he called

into the next office. "Come here and meet a new student."

After a short moment a petite American Indian woman in her early sixties

emerged. Her exceptionally long black hair with grey highlights hung down her back in a

braid that met right above her thighs. She wore long feathered earrings that rested on a floral shall she wore around her shoulders. "Welcome!" she announced loudly. "Oh. You'll love it here! What are you planning to study?"

"I want to be a social studies teacher," I said a bit haltingly, briefly remembering my answer to the same question earlier in the meeting with my adviser.

"That's WONDERFUL! We need good teachers, especially in the social sciences."

I was excited to hear that, remembering that less than an hour ago I had been warned against being a social studies teacher.

"Both Harold and me…I'm Elliana by the way…are both students here and we love it. I'm a history major. Are you planning to get involved in anything on campus? Me and Harold are both on the student government. We are always looking for new leaders."

She and Harold continued to enthusiastically show me around St. Cajetens and the Golda Meir House. "Did you know this was the house of Golda Meir? She was the first woman prime minister of Israel. She lived in Denver for a while and they actually restored her house and moved it here."

After showing me around they told me about the Chicano studies program. I was intrigued by the program because I would get to learn about a history I knew nothing about. Plus, my three-year-old son's father was Chicano, and since he had left, my son would not have any links to his heritage. I was the only one left to provide him with that. I knew how important my Greek heritage was for me, and I knew that eventually his Chicano heritage would be important to him.

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Though I ended up getting a parking ticket that day, it was a day I will never forget. Harold and Elliana became my first two friends at Metro. Elliana became a mentor to me and helped me navigate the history department, which was a lot more difficult to navigate than the small Chicano studies program. Not only would I come to be interested in Chicano studies, I would eventually give up earning a teaching certificate to double major in history and Chicano studies instead. Through my experience in Chicano studies I became politicized and my entire worldview changed. I ended up getting involved with Harold and Elliana in the Student Government and would ultimately become Metro's student body president. I went from being a shy, isolated, single mother to a confident, politically conscious, and involved leader. I found a home in Chicano studies and St. Cajetens Church became my refuge. Though I never met with him again, in his own way, my adviser put me on a path to one of the greatest adventures of my life.

My Privilege. Putting the Spaghettios away in the cupboard, I looked up to find my husband Charles pacing in the living room.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"That King Soopers is racist!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean? They seem fine to me."

"After we split up grocery shopping and I went to go get the ice cream, I looked for you all over the store but couldn't find you…And they, and they followed me!"

"No way!" I said as I returned to putting away the groceries. "You're probably just imagining it. No one was following you."

"You're wrong. I was being followed like I had done something. They're racist. You just don't see it because you're white. All over this town people are always staring at me."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said, continuing to the put the groceries in the refrigerator. "I never see anybody staring at you or following you around."

With this he turned on the television and began to play video games. I finished putting away the groceries and took the dog for a walk. He never brought this up to me again.

This is a conversation I am embarrassed to write about. The man I love was telling me about a racist system that was constantly prejudiced toward him and all I did was shrug it off, not believing his reality. The fact that I could go on putting my groceries away like nothing happened, proves my privilege as a white woman in a mostly white-suburban supermarket and town.

To my knowledge I have never been followed or been seen as suspicious in any store in my adult life. I would not even think to look for someone following me. I have never had people stare at me for looking different and think negatively about me because of my skin color. I can blend into any public place and have no fear that I could be questioned or even arrested by the police for driving my car or walking my dog in a different neighborhood.

Before this conversation I thought that my husband and I shared the same life and reality. I could not understand that his experiences were much different than mine

because society saw him as being different. Reflecting on it now, I know that Charles recognizes a different reality because he is Latino.

Even though I was a Chicano studies major in college, and consider myself a liberally-minded, politically conscious woman, I never truly understood that truth. My privilege never made it a priority. Racism always seemed to be something that happened to other people, happened on the news, or happened in history. I never honestly personalized my political education. Though I know people who are racist, I always felt their prejudice was a result of their ignorance. I never really understood that our systems are racist as well, and that I am an active part of a dominant group who benefits from the subjugation of others who do not share my skin color or status in life.

How could racism be affecting my own family without me even realizing it!? I am writing this dissertation in tribute of this conversation. It is a way for me to reflect, grow, and take action. It is a way for me to tell my husband that, "Yes, honey, I believe you."

Other Limitations.

Theoretical limitations. Due to the fact that not all theories in the universe of this problem have been or could be explored for use in this research, this study has theoretical limitations. Additionally, each of the theories are limited in that each study developing such theories will always have its own limitations.

Methodological limitations. The greatest limitation of this methodology is that the researcher, in the end, decided how the final critical portrait was arranged. Though this was mitigated through a great amount of participant collaboration to the point that

some of the participants were considered co-researchers, this methodology will always be limited by the subjectivity of the researcher and her voice in the final product.

Sample limitations. Though this study's sample met the criteria for both narrative and phenomenological studies, the sample continues to be limited by its size. This makes the study non-generalizable. This study, however, used incredibly "thick description" (Creswell, 2007, p. 204) to ensure that readers can decide for themselves what context may or may not be transferable to their unique context.

Another limitation was the participants themselves, and the chance that they could have reported their experiences using "false consciousness" (Pizarro, 1998, p. 76). This is where participants are not able to view the truth in their own situations and experiences. This, however, was mitigated through extensive triangulation of the data.

Finally, the source of this sample also became a limitation. Because participants in this purposive sample were recruited by a single parent/student activist organization, the participants were all members of this organization and, therefore, their experiences would have been influenced by the organization. PJU was, however, described at length as a part of the context that frames the portraits.

Chapter Four: Findings

The following chapter is a layered representation of the findings in this study. Using CCSP the researcher has organized the critical portraits to coincide with a theme that both represents that specific critical portrait and highlights a constant in many of the portraits. These in-depth critical portraits are written in narrative and thematic form in order to demonstrate the participants' journeys toward becoming educational leaders, how they negotiated and interrogated racialized scripts, and the participants' beliefs as to whether students and parents should be considered educational leaders and be at the forefront in the work to attain educational justice. As cited in the description and development of critical evocative portraiture by Lyman et al. (2014), these portraits follow Elliot Eisner's dimensions of educational criticism including "description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics" (p. 260), as well as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) format of conception, structure, form, and cohesion. The critical portraits also use the participants' voices as much as possible to illustrate their counter voice as developed in CRT methodology and to enhance the significance of their participation in both the portraiture process and the identification of themes. Furthermore, an organizational portrait of PJU was included to help define and bound the case study.

With the successful use of YPAR, PJU students, parents, community members, and staff participated as co-researchers. This included developing interview questions, the final coding of each of the completed critical portraits, the development of themes, and significant contribution to the discussion of the findings. Each participant was interviewed three times using questions developed by PJU student, parent, and staff co-researchers in a group workshop setting. Following this, the researcher used in vivo and thematic coding as supported by the qualitative management system Dedoose to determine themes within the portraits. After substantial member checking and completion of the critical portraits, another group workshop was convened with PJU student, parent, and community member co-researchers (some had participated in the individual portraiture process and some had not). During this workshop co-researchers used descriptive, concept, and simultaneous coding to code all of the completed portraits. This allowed the co-researchers in the workshop to then thematically code the data and collaboratively develop the themes that have been used in this section.

The YPAR dimension permitted this research to become a social justice project in that it provided a learning space that allowed students, parents, and community members to reflect on their own leadership and that of each other. The following are written statements of these co-researchers in the final workshop after they read one another's critical portraits and helped to discover common themes.

- Student Member – "Others, while having and experiencing an immigrant story, their circumstances vary greatly. Not every immigrant story is the same, however, I still feel a strong connection because we share the same

identity. These systems of oppression that foster continuous struggle have shaped greatly their/our lives, yet so much strength and unity has come about. I learned that I don't give myself enough credit for what I have overcome. That I sometimes don't appreciate or look at the positive consequences of how these circumstances have brought qualities I really come to appreciate. Usually, we just look at the negative aspects of how we are limited, but if I had never been through this, I would not have leadership, I would not be engaged in the community at all.

- Student Member – "Their passion for so many things. How interrelated their personal story is with their goals, hopes, dreams, and future. AND their current activism. Love their way of articulating their transformation. How deeply I see my story in the story of others, whether students or parents."

- Parent Member – "Que tenemos siempre algo en comun que mas bien empezó por el deseo de mejorar la vida de nuestros hijos o jovenes pero al final deseamos que se haga justiciar e igualdad en nuestra comunidad. Que estar con personas preparadas y con visiones diferentes (como PJU) me enseña a redescubrir y recuperar parte de mí mismo que habra dejudo como incluso -seguridad en mi misma- [That we always have something in common that started with the desire to improve the lives of our children or young people but in the end we want justice and equality in our community. That being with people prepared and with different visions

(like PJU) teaches me to rediscover and recover part of myself what will I say as even -security in myself-].”

- Community Member – “I learned about other’s experiences and how these have shaped their reality. I am honored to be able to hold these stories and inspired to be surrounded by these individuals. I am reminded of how inspiring my own experiences are as well. Participating with you all today reminded me of why I, similar to many of those in the portraits, chose the career path I did. I feel a sense of community with my peers. I too feel an obligation to help my community (community member).”

This chapter begins with an organizational portrait in order to add context to the individual critical portraits. All names have been replaced by a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality, but the organization’s name and specific locations have remained the same. Demographic information for each of the participants can be found in Appendix H.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos

PJU is an organization that focuses on educational and racial justice at both the local, state, and national levels. Beginning its activism in 1992 with parents demanding educational and racial justice at a local elementary school, PJU has grown to include approximately 100 members, and 1500 supporters from Colorado. 80 percent of these members are youth in high school and the other 20 percent are parents (mostly mothers). Twenty youth and ten parents are considered core leaders at PJU and a handful are Council Members. Most of the members and staff identify as Latinx. Beyond the two founders, who are both on sabbatical and function only in an advisory role, PJU has

seven paid staff. These organizers are in the process of deliberately transitioning the organization's leadership and visionary scope as the original founders fully step away.

PJU began humbly in a storefront next to a small Mexican restaurant, and then to a church in the same neighborhood. In the summer of 2018, they relocated their office to the rear building of the Conflict Center in Denver, a non-profit that provides skills and trainings to peacefully address everyday conflict through building relationships (Conflict Center, 2019). PJU fits into that mission by supporting initiatives that endorse restorative justice practices in schools as well as fighting for educational equity.

Driving to the northside of Denver to meet PJU's staff for the first time, I was in awe of how much the Sunnyside neighborhood had gentrified. As a teenager I used to come to the neighborhood to get burritos from Chubbys on 38th Avenue. The street at that time was filled with small Mexican restaurants, boutiques, and Latinx owned businesses. Now many of the shops have closed and reopened as upscale restaurants, corporate businesses, and coffee shops. The small family-owned businesses that still exist do so within the shadow of high-rise luxury condominiums. The modest houses that line the street have quadrupled in value and can be easily sold for $500,000. The Original Chubby's Burger Drive Inn, which has been a mainstay in north Denver since 1967, was no longer the crowded, cash only, take-out restaurant I remembered. They demolished the old building to make room for a parking lot and opened a huge space that now allows diners to sit down and eat. I was, however, happy to see the green chile was still the same, and many of the people who worked there 20 years ago are still working there today.

Finding the office tucked away behind the large white building that housed the

Conflict Center, I had to step over a small dog as I entered through the single paned glass

door. The miniature pinture sat still in the middle of the hallway and looked at me

curiously as I stepped over him. PJU shared the building with two other non-profits and

was located in the office at the end of the hall. Opening the door to the quiet office, I

immediately saw a medium-sized front room, a small conference room, and seven small

offices on either side of the door. In the front room was a beige colored futon, a small

bookshelf with several books, and a water cooler. Next to the water cooler was a blue

table with a small flat screen television and a small picture album. The walls were filled

with black picture frames capturing the cut-out front pages of the Denver newspaper *El

Seminario* which depicted several of PJU's campaigns. Many other large black frames

held collages of pictures of parents and students in PJU's distinctive red t-shirts both

explanations of an assortment of PJU campaigns.

A small, red frame by the conference room door held a proclamation from the

City and County of Denver urging the United States Congress to pass the *DREAM Act*

(Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) which would protect an

estimated 65,000 students in the United States who held an undocumented status, but had

been in the county for five or more years. This Act would provide protections from

deportation and a pathway to citizenship. Upon the passing of the DREAM Act, students

who earned their high school diploma or GED in the United States could, after a three-

step process, become citizens of the United States. Though the DREAM Act has been

introduced in Congress several times (most recently in 2017), it has yet to pass both

houses of Congress to become law. Many of PJU's staff and students held a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) status, however. This status allowed those with an undocumented status, who came to the United States as children, to remain without fear of deportation, and allowed them work permits and the ability to travel outside of the United States without the fear that they would not be able to return. DACA was an Executive Order passed in 2012 by president Barack Obama. The DACA program has been rescinded, however, by the Trump Administration, and although those who have DACA can currently reapply to remain protected in the United States for another two years, DACA youth are once again worried about their future.

Of the seven staff, I interviewed four at the office. These included Elena, the Co-Executive Director; Yadira, the Organizing Director; Miguel, a Community Organizer; and Pablo, the Digital Coordinator. I also had a brief meeting with Manuel, one of PJU's Co-Founders.

Elena. I met Elena in her medium-sized, neatly organized office. The office was set up with a large desk and white board in order to hold small meetings. Elena is 35 years old and is of medium height. She wore black framed glasses and had sophisticated short salt-and-pepper hair that was swept to the side. It was evident she was very passionate about PJU and their mission, and at times became emotional as she told her story and reflected on the impact the organization's work had on her community. Elena is a first-generation American and grew up the daughter of a single mother from Mexico who was in America with an undocumented status. She was born and raised in southwest Denver. A mother herself now, she is grateful for her mother and understands the balance

and sacrifice it takes to raise a child while working to also put a roof over her head and ensure she receive a good education. Elena has a bachelor's degree in Spanish and sociology. She also has over a decade of experience in non-profits, from which more than half has been spent with PJU.

Yadira. I interviewed Yadira many times and have included a detailed review of our interviews in one of the stand-alone critical portraits. Yadira is 33 years old and was born in Mexico. She came to the United States when she was three years old with her family. She has DACA status and, at 18, raised her brother and sisters when her mother was deported. She joined PJU as a student at North High School and has grown organically into her leadership role. Yadira has a bachelor's degree in sociology and Spanish. She has been an organizer for the last decade.

Miguel. Though only 25 years old, Miguel had a quiet demeanor and seemed older and wiser than his age. We met in Yadira's office and Miguel sat comfortably across from me. He leaned forward casually to relay his story and reflect on his experiences. Dressed in a green sweater, black jacket, and jeans, Miguel wore his hair short and combed over to the side. Born in Mexico and coming to the United States when he was eight, Miguel holds a DACA status. He grew up and continues to live in the working-class neighborhood of Globeville in Denver. His family has a 50-year tradition of going back and forth between the United States and Mexico to work in the American corn fields. This includes his grandparents and his uncles. Miguel is proud of his heritage and also reflected on his experiences as a person within the LGBTQ community. Miguel is currently in college and is working to receive his bachelor's degree in social work. He

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has been working as an organizer in different organizations for close to seven years and has been at PJU for the last five years.

      Pablo. I interviewed Pablo in his office. Though it was small, it was warmly lit with a candle and decorated with a large, wall-sized painting of two beautiful indigenous women seemingly flying through the air. Though the painting only illustrated their faces, they seemed to encompass both hope and determination. According to Pablo this was part of a larger mural created in Denver. When the installation was over, the artist gifted a piece of it to PJU. To the left of the door was a small table with a silk screen press on it. The pattern in the press read "Counselors Not Cops" in Old English text and behind the press was a folded black t-shirt with those same words written in yellow.

      Pablo sat across from me at his desk during the interview. He was relaxed and smiled easily. Wearing a black, hooded sweatshirt and jeans, he had a modern look in his black framed glasses, short, buzzed hair, and goatee. Pablo is 27 years old and was born in Mexico but raised in Arizona, and currently maintains a DACA status. Like Miguel's family, Pablo's family has gone back and forth from the United States to Mexico working on the railroads since the 1940's. His family fled Arizona and came to Colorado when the Arizona legislature passed the Arizona SB 1070 that allowed the police to stop and question anyone they thought might be an undocumented immigrant. This made even walking down the street dangerous for his family. Though Pablo took a few courses in college, the out-of-state tuition made college untenable at the time. He is primarily a self-taught organizer and hopes to go back to college in the near future. Pablo has worked for

PJU for a little over a year. He was confident and passionate as he spoke about his own experiences and the mission and workings of PJU.

   Connecting to the community, leadership, values and the PJU way. Each staff member had a unique connection to the community. When asked directly if he felt he represented the community he was working for, Pablo said with determination,

   I do. And the reason I do is because, again, my background as far as where I come from. That's one. And two, the way that we live and then the way of how I can relate to everything that the community is going through because, one, my family went through the same thing and is still is going through the same thing. Lack of opportunities, the way that we—the type of jobs that we get as far as my family. And the way of how we're impacted by every decision that any administration puts out. The working class and—I dress how my community dresses. I don't see myself differently from them. And because I am part of my community, and so I have always been a strong believer that, one, we have to have those type of individuals and the way of the organizations being the same as our communities. And so, I've always considered myself the same.

Answering the same question, Miguel responded:

   Yes, I do. Because we, as someone in this position, we work directly with people of color, more specifically with the Latino and Chicano population, Mexican population. So yeah, I'm from the community. I came up from the leadership development and a lot of resources that were invested in me. I came up through community organizers sitting down with me and making those leadership plans

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with me. Within my capacity, in whatever space I was…there was my community with me, and they always had a plan for me.

Yadira believed that being part of the community is what PJU is all about.

I cannot pinpoint. I think a lot of my favorite moments are around just being in the community with people, that sort of the more social aspect of this work. Yeah, just we've had last year—or it was the year before that we had a *pasado* for the holidays. And so, we invited members and leaders, and we sort of did an end of the year report back of everything that we accomplished that year. And it was so much. We never realize it until we have to do some sort of report for a grant, and we're like, 'Holy Shit! We did so much.' But in this case, we did it with members, and so we accomplished so much. And then it was a feeling of celebration. No, we didn't win huge things, and no, most of our campaigns are still ongoing, but that sense of celebrating where we are now, how far we've come, and celebrating how well we're doing and for a moment, just forgetting about the oppression and all of the BS that we deal with and all of the pain and just laughing and just sharing with each other how our families are doing.

And I love those moments because it really tells me and makes me feel that we are generally connected. I feel really connected on a human level to everyone that we do this work with. And we can go very easily from, 'This is [a] serious time we're preparing for a meeting with the principal,' to, 'Let's laugh and let's tell jokes.' And both are very, very necessary, and I think in organizing, the latter, the

celebration, the community, the laughter, we don't do enough of because we're always, 'Work, work, work.'

At PJU it was important the organizers facilitated the leadership of their members, not lead for them. It meant nothing if the organizers were leading a campaign; parents, students, and community members must be the ones to lead. If there was no authentic leadership, there was no campaign. According to the PJU Leadership Ladder, there were four levels of leadership:

- Supporter - Follows PJU on social media, has signed up as a state affiliate, has given PJU their contact information, supports PJU petitions and endorses campaigns, donates to PJU. Supporters have been asked to support PJU during in-person outreach or through social media.

- Member - Identifies as a PJU member, believes in the mission of PJU, can explain campaigns, promotes PJU on social media, participates in PJU actions, events, and other meetings, engages in participatory research and outreach events. Members attend chapter/affiliate meetings and attend PJU orientation.

- Core Leader - Takes specific responsibilities such as recruitment, training, chairing/facilitating meetings, recruits new members, defends PJU and sees themselves as part of the entire organization, donates to PJU, leads a PJU chapter or affiliate. Core leaders have leadership development and weekly 1:1 with a staff member and attend chapter/affiliate meetings.

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- Council Member - Can lead workshops and trainings, facilitate meetings on their own, help with campaign planning, actively build unity with identified leaders and allies, is part of PE (Political Education) with staff, support staff with leadership development of emerging leaders. Council members sit on the parent concillio/youth leadership council, sign a commitment form, attends PJU organizing 101 action camp.

The values the PJU staff work under are:

- Trabajar con Ganas [Work with Urgency] – "We step-up to support one another in all tasks and hold aspects of the organization accountable. We believe in 'working smarter, not harder' and trust our coworkers to do excellent work in a timely manner."

- Calling-In – "We are transparent and honest with one another to ensure a healthy unified team. We respectfully and proactively deal with frustrations and disagreements, while maintaining a positive work environment. We have constructive conflicts so we can all call PJU our political home."

- Speak Truth to Power – "We will boldly call out all forms of oppression in order to create a revolutionary community. We are unapologetic in our approach and strive to upend the status quo."

- Community Care – "This work is demanding and cannot be done alone. We value the wellbeing of each person, and we support and encourage one another in centering ourselves. We care for ourselves and each other, because we need each of us in the long haul."

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In addition to the PJU leadership ladder and the working values, PJU had a formula that guided their activism. They called it the PJU Way. When a problem occurred, PJU worked first to look at the root of the problem, including any historic or systemic issues, and then worked to solve the problem through a dialectical process. This process included working with any and all people and organizations that were significant to solving the problem. If these people or organizations refused to work with PJU or even understand there was a problem, PJU would use any and all organizing resources and tactics at its disposal. This included, but was not limited to, organizing tactics such as rallies, walk-outs, petitioning, one-on-ones with school officials and legislators, partnering with legislators to create bills, and phone calls to law makers. PJU, however, always preferred to work with schools and legislators to solve problems, opposed to collective action or protests.

According to organizers, the PJU Way made PJU different from other educational activist organizations. By examining root causes, they also helped their members understand who they were in proximity to those root causes, focusing great effort on cultural identity. When asked what made PJU different, Pablo responded:

> I feel that Padres is different because the way of their approach for everything and for every issue that we encounter, we always have to address also the root cause of it and I feel like a lot of organizations, their approach is more pragmatic rather than using and rather than addressing the real issue. And so that's what makes Padres a little bit different than other organizations.

I guess the cultural perspective of what Padres comes from. Padres' focus is a lot on our history. Our Mexicano, Chicano history that the struggles and the history of this used to be Mexico, like this is—and that's never to be forgotten. And so, the point and one of the things that Padres brings is for us to understand this is where we've always been and we're not going to be pushed around, and this is our community. Our communities here have been through generations and generations and back when it was Mexico and for us to be pushed around and pretty much do whatever they want, we've got to, one, teach that to our students and leaders that come through Padres but, two, it's more of like owning our own identity still.

That's one of the things that definitely Padres is big on as far as—I learned a lot of my history here too. A lot of the things like I knew where I come from, I knew my parents because of what my parents taught me, never learned it in school but it's more of like... Then I came here at Padres and really learned more about my upbringings and my culture and how to really be and own my own identity. And so, a lot of the time it was like, 'Well, I'm in a different country, I should Americanize myself,' and coming into Padres, it's, 'No, you own who you are, and you say who you are and that's you. You're Mexicano, you're Chicano. That's who you are. Don't Americanize yourself based on what society is telling you to be.' And I feel like that was a lot of where I came from as far as that because growing up, I was going to military school after my regular school because I wanted to join the Army. I wanted to be that. I ranked top of my class. I was like,

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'Yeah, this is the most American thing I'm doing,' because I reflected back on it. It's like yeah, I wanted to be accepted trying to be somebody else. And one of the things that Padres has done is like, 'No, you are you,' and that's really culturally based. And that's one of the things that I'm most proud of.

Elena added to this by explaining PJU's processes:

I think, like I said earlier, we're very transformative. We're not shy to call out racism or address any other type of root causes. And I think that's pretty much what it is. And then really training our staff to be themselves and to speak truth to power. I think we've had, for example, Pablo. When he came from a more pragmatic organization, it was just being nice to politicians and then we're like, 'Do you really feel comfortable with that?' And he went through his own transformation and his own speaking truth to power. And now it's like he identifies as Chicano and understands that and claims it and I think that it really is a political home for a lot of people. I think that's what sets us apart. It's not like a job. I guess it's to get that sense of community but the center of it is like really, really transformative—transforming our minds and transforming our community which I think it really, it's like the hub of everything we do.

A new chapter for PJU.

PJU Strategic Planning Meeting. The three-hour PJU Strategic Planning meeting was held on a Saturday morning in mid-December. Entering a large room lined with books, I noticed parent, community, and youth PJU members already entering the room. There were four rows of chairs and almost everyone sat in the back two rows. I also took

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a seat in the back row. The space was in the Conflict Center building and separate from the PJU office. At the front of the room was a whiteboard with "Isang Bagsak – one fall, one down" written on it. There was also a projector, and a projector screen coming down from the ceiling. There was candy set out on the desk to the side of the door. Elena laughed at this lack of nutritious food and offered to get some granola bars they had in the office. Yadira and another staff member were sitting in the back row talking and laughing with each other, switching between Spanish and English. Both had a blanket wrapped around their shoulders.

"Put on musica or something…combiar something happy." Miguel said as he entered the room. The staff member speaking with Yadira began to play some Mexican music from his computer.

Several youth came into the room and sat in the back rows. Yadira greeted them saying, "So how's school? Your finals are this week, yes? Are you guys excited for break? Do you have to take care of siblings?"

A young woman with long brown hair said, "Yes, all the time."

Yadira asked, "How many siblings do you have?"

She student replied, "Six siblings. I'm second to the oldest."

Yadira then turned her attention to the rest of the group and asked them about their recent trip to Washington D.C. where they joined other youth across the country to potentially meet with United States legislators and protest the findings of the Commission on School Safety that was to make recommendations that same week. PJU and other national organizations discovered the Commission was going to recommend that schools

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spend more money on armed police officers in schools instead of investing in school counselors and mental health professionals.

Yadira said, "Say something funny about your D.C. trip."

A girl with shoulder length dark hair said cringing, "I went the wrong way and we had to take a Lyft back."

"I thought the National Mall was actually a mall," another female student said laughing.

A parent entered the room with her three-year-old daughter in tow. The parent, who spoke only Spanish, greeted everyone, including myself, with a hug. She then drifted around the room briefly conversing with the staff in Spanish. She took a seat in the second row next to an interpreter that had been provided for her.

Elena announced, "Everyone needs to move forward two rows." So, everyone moved forward, and the room became quiet in anticipation of Elena's presentation. In all, there were 16 members present. She said, "If you are not bilingual make sure you get a headset because half of the meeting will be in English and the last half will be in Spanish. We want to make sure that everyone is included, and everyone has their voice heard." I was a bit embarrassed when I realized I was the only one who needed a headset. Besides the parent who came in with the little girl, I was the only one in the room who was not bilingual. I was a bit embarrassed, and it made me wish I spent more time studying Spanish in college.

As the meeting commenced, I could smell the warm aroma of burnt sage spreading across the room. Suddenly a young man sitting next to me handed me a large,

smoking sage wand that was being passed from member to member. This was passed silently as the members began listening to Elena begin her political education presentation. All of the members seemed to accept the burning of the sage as a common ritual that occurred at the beginning of every meeting.

The first part of Elena's presentation was about America's One Percent and how, since the country passed civil rights laws in the 1960's, the One Percent had strategically worked to take the country back for the wealthy. Ella said to the group, "What did this mean for people with money? They started to freak out!"

A student in the second row yelled, "Whack!"

Elena said, "When we are dealing with people in power, we shouldn't feel uncomfortable making them feel uncomfortable. They are screwing us over! Since this new administration, organizing has been a lot harder—a lot of putting out fires—how do we start winning again? The One Percent started to come together and act collectively, then brought in money, think tanks, media, coalitions like the NRA. When we think about our work, we need to think about what they are doing. At the end of the day we are fighting for power. We need to change the narrative. We all know this; it just puts it into perspective."

New Leadership. PJU began almost thirty years ago when two seasoned activists, who had roots in both the farmworkers movement and the Chicano movement, moved to Denver from Texas. One night they saw Chicano and Mexican parents on the evening news upset about the way their children were being treated at a Denver elementary school. The principal at the school was punishing Spanish-speaking children by making

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them eat their lunch on the floor of the school cafeteria. The two knew they needed to

help and immediately went to the parents and offered to assist them in organizing to

remove the principal (Warren, 2018). This married couple organized PJU in order to help

parents—and eventually students in the community—find their voice during that

campaign and many successful campaigns thereafter. Under their leadership, the

organization grew from a small grassroots group who were only focused on local issues

to a group (still grassroots) that were known nationally for facilitating the first

intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between the community, the school district, and the

police department in regard to student behavior. Before this IGA was signed, DPS had

first worked with PJU and agreed to include restorative justice within their discipline

policy. The district then worked with DPD to become educational partners as opposed to

enforcers. This would mean that DPD would help to positively support students instead

of issuing tickets for minor school offences. This change to the district's discipline policy

laid a framework for both the state of Colorado and federal behavior guidelines. This was

the first time an educational justice group had been able to facilitate such change. So,

when the two organizers decided to begin transitioning out of the organization and into

retirement, the decision was not an easy one and required extensive planning to maintain

such a legacy.

Every part of this leadership transition was carefully orchestrated and researched.

Based on this research, the organizers found that many organizations who transitioned

from founding leadership to outside, hired leadership failed within a few years of the

transition because the outside leadership could not maintain the original vision of a

grassroots organization. Instead the two decided to grow the new leadership from within

the organization and orchestrated a plan where one would go on sabbatical for a year,

while the other would follow the year after and transition to a senior advisor for the

group. In the meantime, they would choose leadership from within, train her/him and

help the person become a Co-Executive Director alongside them during this process.

Manuel, one of the original founders explained,

> Well because we believe in developing internally with leadership. How are we
>
> going to accept a director from the outside that's really not familiar with the
>
> organization history, our legacy, the community? It makes much more sense and a
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> stronger determination in the moment if you plan on the long-term. So, at this
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> point—you know one of the executive directors, she's on sabbatical. And the
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> other executive director was named in-house director. But you have to plan that
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> progression intentionally. Otherwise, things exist, from our experience, that we
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> have seen other groups across the country that don't plan this out. And they end
>
> up hiring from outside the organization and things quickly pop up. In the three
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> groups that I know, with some of the politics, that has happened that people have
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> to step back into leadership to be able to stabilize it. So, we learned from them
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> that you've got to have a higher progression plan and then do it well. So that's
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> why we practice that new members come to the organization and we have the
>
> intention of developing early. So, this is part of the continuation.

The person they chose was Elena. They chose her because she not only had an

incredible organizing and management skill set and successful and lengthy track record

with the organization, but also because she was from the community and grew up like many of PJU's youth. She was also trusted and respected by other PJU staff, parents, students, and community members. Incredibly honored to be chosen and entrusted to carry on such a legacy, and with great reverence and respect for the original founders, she explained how her leadership would both honor the founders' original vision and help to transform the organization to the next level. When asked what kind of leadership style she led with, and what made her leadership different from the founders, she said humbly,

> I have a responsibility to continue the legacy of this organization that's been around for over 26 years. And for me, as a leader or the type of leader that I am, is having a balance. Or being able to continue the end goal of dismantling racism. But at the same time, listening and adapting to where people are at. I do like to be a team player and try to really incorporate those different ideas, initiatives, because I don't believe that I know all the answers. I think that it's more like being able to lead but also making sure that I'm part of a team.
>
> I think because I'm technically the ED (Executive Director) of Padres. We have the two co-founders, EDs—they're still around, but I think the difference is—I think just my experience, my work experience in management and operations like I shared earlier. And then they taught me the political strategizing piece. So, I think that because they came straight out of organizing, they didn't go to school to be managers or anything, they were literally in a struggle their whole life. They have organized their entire life. So, I think the combination of the two has really helped me be who I am today. I think the difference is just my own work

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experience and just my own life experience is different from the '80's and '90's. They can say, 'Oh, when we were on the picket lines with Cesar Chavez, we did this.' I don't have that reference. I've never met Cesar Chavez. Or I've never occupied colleges to open them for folks of color. I don't have that experience. So, I think that's going to be missing, but they did a good job training me and then like I said, the combination of my own work and life experience has been a good combination.

More than a change in leadership. In the PJU Strategic Planning Meeting, PJU organizers outlined their plans for the next year. They referred to these plans as "a new chapter for PJU." Though it was evident that some of that new chapter included new leadership for the organization, they spoke more significantly about a shift in how they approached issues; this included applying for a 501(c)4 and harnessing electoral power by sponsoring candidates and participating in electoral campaigns. Until this year, PJU had only been a 501(c)3 which allowed the group to rally around issues and school board members but restricted them from getting involved in specific campaigns for US Senate seats or even Governor. By carefully splitting their time between the 501(c)3 and 501(c)4, they could do both as long as they accounted for what time was spent where and what money was spent specifically toward each action. It was a careful and complex balance, but one PJU was determined to make work.

In addition, they planned to open up the organization statewide. Though they already had youth chapters in Longmont, Leadville, and Sheridan, Colorado, they also planned to develop chapters in Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Thornton/Westminster.

Finally, they planned to also work on a national level with several other educational justice organizations including the Advancement Project (who they had been working with for several years), Journey for Justice, Alliance for Educational Justice, and the United We DREAM organization.

The staff saw this new chapter as something that was more about the new political environment, as opposed to a transition in leadership. Instead of focusing on individual schools, they were now determined to concentrate on district and state policy Asked what this new chapter in PJU meant to him, Pablo answered reflectively,

I see that in how we're developing the leaders to, for example—and I'm talking about leaders in high school that have been with Padres since they were freshmen in high school and now, they're going off to college. You wouldn't see many of that back in the years. And back in the years I mean ten years ago. And now we're seeing a lot of the people who are students that are involved, and they're like, 'Oh yeah, well I'm going California State,' or, 'I'm going to a different university.' That's one of the things our co-founders Patricia and Manuel, 26 years in the organization, that's huge. And seeing that the type of team that we have, we're more of a family. And we know exactly where we need to go, and the things that need to be done in a much more detailed, strategic way because back in again five, ten years ago, and based even on the history that I read around Padres, it's like it's definitely a different atmosphere.

It is just like, how intellectual people are becoming aware of the issues. How willing they are to join because our communities are starting to not be scared

anymore versus back then. It's like our communities were really hesitant. At different levels—because older people will always be that way given that my parents are scared. They're even scared that I do this work. But more of the new chapter—meaning our co-founders—are starting to kind of be on the back end, and kind of seeing us and mentoring us for us to be able to take off. That's another big thing. And two is just, it's definitely growing. The struggle is growing, but our movement is growing as well. Yeah, it's just like different scales that everything has been for us is starting as a new chapter.

People are willing to take to the streets now. I mean you can even see it in, for example, the undocumented families. Back then, and I can speak for myself too, back then they used to tell us, 'Don't say you're undocumented. Never talk to anybody about your status. Just don't go to protests, you might get deported.' And now it's like I'm undocumented, and I'm here, and I've gone to the Capitol, and I went to Washington D.C. at the first State of the Union. I was there sitting in front of Trump; you know what I mean? And I'm undocumented. And people are willing to do that now, versus 20 years ago, it would only be select people to be able to do that.

Because they're understanding the ways and the structures that are meant for us to be scared. They're understanding, for example, students didn't even know they had rights. Back then, police could come in and do whatever they want with you and we were just like, well, they were pleased but now students through education and through that, they were like, 'No. You know what? You're not going to do

this.' The people are willing to stick up for themselves because of the education

that organizations and groups and community groups are doing now because

they're understanding, one, what's at stake, and two, they're saying that the

structure is meant for us to be this way and we're tired of it. We're just tired of it.

We've seen generations and generations having to put up through that and I think

this is the generation where we understand it enough for it to not keep going.

Miguel responded to the same question, saying,

I feel like Padres has had different seasons. I think it's a new chapter because our

work looks very different from before. I think it has to. It has to look different

from before in order for us to survive as an organization and to continue doing

work at the city-wide level. I think at some points in doing this, we were working

just for risk schools, for schools, and that worked well. That worked out. But I

don't think we can continue to do that. We have to pass policy at the city level, at

the district level, state level. We have to go wide. We cannot just focus on to a

school because we can get dragged into just that very school's politics. So, having

a vision where we move from that to wide. And I feel like we are in that period of

transition. Our work has also been transformed into a new campaign which is a

'Counselors Not Cops' campaign. So, I feel like it's a new era where we had the

opportunity to do that. It's work; it's heavy. But it does feel like a new baby. If we

didn't transition leadership and if we didn't transition into a new model of

organizing, our organization could have potentially stalled or died, which has

happened to other organizations in the community.

Elena also described a new organizational model:

> Yeah. One, I think it's a different leadership, which is different. Two, if you look at our history, we focused a lot on individual cases. Parents would call us, and they would be like, 'Hey, I have this. My kid was suspended.' And we would just go, and we were like case managers. And then in 2003 when we started to work on the discipline policy, we realized that we needed to do more district-level work and pass policy at that level. And we've been doing that. We've been going back and forth with DPS. And now, the next chapter is really just being strategic and focus on less issues because, for a while, we had literally five different campaigns, with four organizers doing five different campaigns. Now we want to expand Padres statewide, merge electoral power, which we haven't really—we've talked about it but haven't put it into practice. We now have a plan to expand statewide, build electoral power, build alliances with key labor organizations— there's a clearer vision to really build political power in Colorado, so from base to voters to really passing policy now at the state level.

Leadville, Colorado PJU Youth Chapter. Leadville, Colorado is about the furthest one can get from Denver. It is the second highest town in the state, and although it was once almost named the Capitol of Colorado, it now has only 2,759 people. The high school supports 441 students from Leadville and the surrounding areas. The town is a majority Latinx, and though many mountain towns in Colorado are extremely expensive to live in, Leadville is home to working-class families who drive about 25 miles to the ski resort to work.

Coming into town on a cold, winter morning, I noticed the temperature reading in my car read -8 degrees. The town seemed part of an Ansel Adams' black and white photograph, with snow-laden pine trees and grey streets only illuminated by an overcast grey sky. Many of the small houses and building were remnants of Leadville's glory days in the late 1800's when the town supported a thriving silver mine. Leadville was on the cusp of a snow storm that was slowly rolling in and would arrive with force the next day. The high school building overlooked the two highest peaks in Colorado, Mount Elbert and Mount Massive, which were partially obscured by clouds.

Leadville's PJU Youth Chapter was in its second year of existence. The group had changed school sponsors twice in that short time, and although the Chapter had about 40 students involved the first year, the membership had dwindled to ten the second year. Joining the group during their lunch meeting, it was obvious they were in recruiting mode because they were asked by their sponsor to each bring one friend to the next meeting. Though the meeting was small, it was spirited. As students ate tacos and drank homemade *horchata* from a food truck owned by one of the student's parents, they were focused on an agenda that included providing more support and direction for students around college scholarships and planning to present their ideas to the principal about modifying lunch detention. They felt the detention was given too often for insignificant things, such as not bringing a pencil to class. To them it no longer served as a deterrent for negative behavior. They wanted to review the rules around how students received lunch detention. With stricter policies regarding behaviors "that really mattered" they

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believed the consequences should be greater, such as afterschool detention or Saturday school.

Interviewing two of the student members, it was clear that being involved with PJU, even for a short time, had a major effect on them. Adrian, a tall, wiry Latino young man of 16 years of age, with an abundance of energy, reflected on his experiences with the group. He responded using his experiences with sports as an example and noticed that his leadership had transformed from being primarily about himself to being about other students as well. He also liked that he could be himself with the group and no one pre-judged him.

> I've always played sports since I was little. So, a lot of kids know me as that, but
> in front of our class. And I've always been a captain when we would play little
> league basketball and soccer and this and that. But I see now that when I've been
> chosen as captain, I used to do the bare minimum of work. When I see somebody
> else failing, I helped them, but as soon as I got frustrated, I'd just leave and not
> help them, which made it counterintuitive of being a captain. But then, with
> Padres I've seen that even though you get frustrated, you should put yourself aside
> and try to help your teammate before you put any of your input. Because a lot of
> our kids, the younger kids on the JV squad, they don't really like being told how
> to do it or what to do. Because they've always played like shoot, shoot, shoot,
> instead of pound it inside and then, shoot. So, it's like be myself, but still be the
> captain and leader. But put myself aside before I tell a kid what to do.

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Ever since I was little, I was always mean and protective about my little brother. So, kids would always mess with him. And then I'd always beat them up or do something mean towards them and call them names. So, I've always been like a bully, but not for any particular reason other than to defend my little brother. So, all through life with all my friends, the kids that don't know me, they're like, 'Oh, well, this kid's a bully because of this and that,' because I used to do it when I was little or whatever. I've always had that image of like, 'Don't approach that kid. He's mean. Don't approach that kid. He only cares about sports or this and that.' So, when I come to Padres I feel like a person and I don't have that image distorted on me or anything.

Paulina, an 18-year-old senior at the school, felt that although the group had helped strengthen the rules around lunch detention, while also helping to add a Biliteracy Endorsement to their diploma (for students who take and pass AP Spanish), there were still greater things that PJU could do in the community.

Well, personally, I think a lot of businesses that are meant to be helping those who have mental health illnesses or anything personal like that. They can do more about it because they know when my cousin passed away, we went to the hospital to pick up his things, and they didn't want to give them to us. And just probably just because my aunt didn't speak English, and I didn't know English either because I had barely started school here. So, I think having translators in places that were, because this community's mainly Hispanic, so they should know that having translators, especially in this generation, is really important. So, I think

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just businesses, more like government-run, should be able to help the community,
the Hispanic community members, more so than the white population.

Both students were deeply reflective on PJU's current campaign "Counselors Not
Cops." Though Paulina had accompanied the group to Washington D.C. to lobby the
Commission on School Safety to recommend that schools invest in mental health services
and not police officers, the issue had not really hit home until the past week when the
school went into lockdown because of a potential school shooter. The students were
grateful for the police officers who responded to the incident, but found their continued
presence was traumatic. Though their school did not have a stationed or revolving police
officer at the time, because of this incident, the school was now going to hire one. Neither
student felt this was a good idea and felt that the money to pay for the officer could be
used for a new counselor or other mental health support that was lacking in their building.
When their school had revolving police officers in the past, they and their friends felt
threatened by them, feeling they made their school less safe. This, however, was not the
fact when they had a stationed officer who attempted to connect with the students. Adrian
described the situation and how the students felt.

> So, there was this thing on Snapchat. A kid made a user on Snapchat and then he
> added a bunch of kids, so I was one of the kids that was involved in being added
> by that person or whatever. And they were at first, I thought it was just a joke so
> I'm like, 'Well, you know what? You can go f off,' this and that, but then a lot of
> us, within that hour, because we were all at practice, we were always talking
> about it. 'Hey, did you get added by this person?' or whatever. Turns out that kid

was going to shoot up the school, this and that, but when he talked to you or whatever, he'd attack you personally. He's like, 'Well, I know you… this person, this person, this person. You guys did this, this day, and that and that,' so you were first being personally attacked and then as a whole it was like a threat of a school shooting and that stuff. So, it was like—yeah, it got bad.

I saw it [the police] as support because if it were to happen within the week or whatever, we know we'd have someone there or whatever, but we also saw it as a threat because it's like, oh, everybody knows what's going on. Anything could happen at this point. It was counterintuitive to have them in here, but it was also—because I was like, 'Oh, they're here so that means it could happen today or it could happen tomorrow,' or it could happen this and that or whatever, so it was, yeah, counterintuitive.

We used to have one [police officer] here. I used to talk to him a lot because he's one of my teammate's dad or whatever, and he was always the cool one that we had but then they'd always start switching them out so then at points we'd have a tall one and then a short, stubby one and it was like, well a lot of us already built a bond with that first officer. Why would you start moving them around and stuff? So, it was counterintuitive to have one after you start switching a lot of them. We should have just one set if we were to get one again.

Because a lot of us did have relationships with him because he was always cool with us. He would always treat us as humans and not like, 'Oh, I have authority so I'm this big dog,' or whatever. He was always relating to you. He'd see you

messing around in the hallways and he wouldn't tell you anything he'd just look at you and be like, 'Come on, guys. You should be in class,' this and that. That's when our school was better, I'd say, because we had him here and he was cool with us, and then we started switching cops and it was like I don't even want to be in this school anymore.

They always looked mad and then the fact that they'd wear their sunglasses inside, they'd walk down the hall and there'd be two of them and they'd always have their glasses on like if they just came in from outside and stuff, and then they'd be standing in the corners or whatever and they felt very unapproachable, even just walking down the hall. When we get called out to lunch or whatever, they'd be around there and you felt this silence and nervousness within every student because they'd stand in the crossroad and then you'd give them a big old circle of space and everybody crowded each other because we felt that presence, as authority not as a person.

PJU seemed have a positive impact on both students, but they also felt very detached from PJU's main office in Denver. They felt that because they were not in Denver, and close to the main action, they were treated differently, and that the organization was disorganized. Paulina said,

I think more like what they're doing as a whole group because we're so far away from them and how the guy in charge of everything was supposed to come up today too, and last week and he keeps canceling on us. So, I think knowing what they're doing would probably help us continue with what we're trying to do. We

need more support. And the guy in charge is 21, so I feel like maybe if the guy was much older, the whole organization would be more organized than unorganized.

When asked about their support of the PJU Youth Chapters, especially the ones that were as far away as Leadville, Yadira said that she knew they needed more support but that the PJU staff was having difficulty determining how involved or hands on they should be because they needed to balance the needs of that specific community with PJU's main campaigns. She felt they were still in a large learning curve concerning supporting all of the Chapters and getting everyone on the same page.

PJU Lobby Day - The People's Wave. On a cold, but clear Monday morning in March, 30 PJU parents and students walked the two blocks from the Colorado Trust to the golden dome of the Colorado State Capitol. Walking in groups they were easily distinguishable by their yellow shirts that read "Education Not Deportation" written in black lettering on the front and "The People's Wave" written on the back. The shirts were in reference to a bill that had all but died in Colorado's House of Representatives called *Virginia's Law*. The law created "safe spaces" from deportation. This included schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, shelters, courthouses, and probation departments. It also required local law enforcement to provide anyone who was to be questioned about their immigration status, and potentially at risk of being detained by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), information in their native language about their rights. Though the bill would not pass, PJU wanted to highlight its importance in symbolic unity with students and families who had an undocumented status.

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This law was not the only issue the members were going to the Capitol to discuss, however. They wanted to also support Colorado HB-1194 which would protect students younger than eight from being suspended or expelled. They also wanted to create a preemptive strike on a bill PJU was working on with representatives and senators to introduce late in the session. This bill would protect students from being arrested on school grounds for minor offenses, free up more money for mental and behavioral health supports in schools, and require schools with a great number of discipline and ticketing records to reduce the number of police in schools.

Getting to the Capitol and navigating the system in which members could speak with their Senators and Representatives was chaotic. Most of the students and parents had never been to the Capitol before and there was a great deal of anxiety and anticipation as they moved through the crowded, but beautifully gilded corridors to find the appointed Sergeant at Arms. The Sergeant at Arms was to take their message cards to the legislators who would then choose, when they had time, to come out to the hallway to speak to the members. It seemed to me to be an inefficient way to lobby, but the only means available to constituents who were not backed by large corporations. Another avenue would be to go to the legislator's office and speak with their aides. The note given to the Sergeant at Arms read,

> Dear Representative/ Senator (fill in name), I am at the Capitol today with Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. I would like a few minutes of your time to discuss a few issues that concern me. Please meet me in the lobby at your convenience. Thank you. (Member's name and address.)

The members were trained by PJU ahead of time in how to give an "elevator speech" that would allow the member to communicate who they were, why they were at

the Capitol, why the issue mattered to them, and what they would like the legislator to do about it. Members were encouraged not to get into the politics of the issues, but to instead share their stories. These stories, a PJU organizer said, were much more powerful than arguing policy. "Don't be afraid to talk to them. Start to think how to tell your story. You all have a story that is powerful and will actually move legislators." Each group of four to five members had a Lobby Leader who was in charge of helping to navigate the group through the process. These leaders had received more training than the other members.

As the groups filtered through the loud hallways, they were told by the Senate's Sergeant at Arms that the Senate was in the middle of a debate and they would not be able to meet with them that day. Due to this, the groups then naturally converged outside of the House of Representatives. Though there were several citizen groups waiting to lobby the Representatives, PJU members stood out in their yellow t-shirts.

At about lunch time, two representatives came out of the chamber to speak to the group. A direct and self-assured Congresswoman seemed extremely interested in what the group had to say and asked leading questions to some of the students who were, at first, very hesitant to speak. After she asked a student member about whether she had experience with restorative practices at her school, the young woman immediately jumped in with, "Well, I've actually led Restorative Justice Circles!" Then with a measured but powerful voice she let the Representative know that Restorative Justice Circles allowed the dispute or behavior to "start and end in the Circle." The Circle then, instead of handing out punitive punishments, would create relationships and allow all parties to better understand each other and to connect on a level they would have never

connected on before. This created an atmosphere where the behavior was less likely to occur in the future and would allow the student to remain in class and part of the learning community. The representative was impressed with this student's personal experience and shared a story of her own, where restorative practices helped her avoid suspension and create "an extremely close relationship" with a girl she had been in a fight with during her time in middle school. She said without that intervention she could have been suspended or arrested, and her life would have never been the same. Without this she was sure that she would have never become a State Representative and could have ended up on "a really horrible path."

Impressed with the students, the Representative invited the group of about ten members to the "patio." To get there, she took the group through the House floor and explained to them what happened and where it happened on the floor. She introduced the group to several of her colleagues who were still on the floor discussing policy with each other during their lunch. They were all very gracious and met the members with a smile and, "Hello and welcome to the House." She then opened a large window and beckoned the parents and students to walk through. "Be careful coming out here though or else I'll get in trouble," she said laughing. The members joined several other Representatives on a small concrete balcony that had a tremendous view of Denver's City and County building framed against a panorama of gorgeous snow-topped mountains. It was breathtaking. The Representative explained, "Sometimes I come out here and I look at Denver and I think what could be for our state and what should be." She then went on to explain that she was the first "black and Queer" representative in the state and described her inspiring story in

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becoming a Representative. The members hung on every word. "If I can do it, you can do it too. We need more leaders like us. More leaders of color."

She then gathered the members and took a picture with them in front of the incredible backdrop. As I observed this, I could not help but remember that on the same day, exactly 50 years earlier, West High School students walked out of class in protest of a racist teacher and practices in their school. On this day, however, students were not walking out, but walking in. Today they had brought their voice and their leadership to a level that many in that Walkout could have never dreamed possible.

Theme One: A Foundation for Activism

Immigration, community cultural wealth, bicultural identity, and obligations. This theme runs throughout all of the portraits. As parents and students discussed their immigration stories, or those of their parents, they also discussed how these stories and the cultural wealth gained from them informed both their bicultural identity and their reason for their activism. Parents and students felt that without this foundation they would not be engaged. In addition, parents and students also discussed the stress and mental health challenges that came with their undocumented status and/or those of their parents. This included actual family separation or the fear of it. This anxiety was exasperated by the current Trump Administration and what parents and students believed were its unfairly strict stance and overtly xenophobic and racist views and policies on immigration. This made engaging in activism a risk, but a risk parents and students felt was worth taking. Despite the uncertainty of their and their families' future, however, they persevered and fought for both their dreams and the dreams of their

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community. Many believed that because of their experiences, activism was not a choice but an obligation to themselves, their children, and their community.

Alejandro. Joining PJU as a youth member when he was 15, Alejandro spoke from the point-of-view of a young man on the cusp of graduating from college with his bachelor's degree in management. Spending the last seven years as a PJU youth activist, student leader, and now PJU board member, he reflected critically on his life, his involvement and growth in PJU, his leadership as both a student and a member of his community, and what the future might hold for him.

I met Alejandro several times, in several different settings. In each encounter he appeared to be engaged and active in every activity and conversation. He preferred to sit in the front of the room, while others gathered in the back. He was contemplative and studiously observant of his surroundings. Studying the room and the conversation through black framed glasses, he was an athletic looking young man who dressed casually, but neat, in his polo sweatshirt and jeans. His attire matched his well-ordered short dark hair that he combed back and over to the side and immaculate goatee that developed into a short-manicured beard that laid under his chin. His eyes struck me to be kind and lit up when he smiled. When we first had the chance to sit down with each other in the book-lined conference room of the Conflict Center, he sat up straight in his chair and answered my questions directly, looking both at me and reflectively past me as he fell into his thoughts.

Immigration story and a family's unique culture. Alejandro was born in Mexico and came to the United States with his mother, two older brothers, and older sister when

he was five years old. One of his oldest brothers decided to stay in Mexico instead of joining their father in America. Alejandro had not seen his brother since his family immigrated. He felt sad to have lost his connection to such a close family member. Though his parents had thought about returning to Mexico, he believed they had built a life in America and did not plan to go back. Alejandro spent his childhood in Denver and now lives with his parents, his brother, his sister, his brother-in-law, and his sister's two children. It was a bustling household that was seldom quiet but always filled with love. When asked why they had chosen to all live in one household he explained,

> In our culture, our household usually likes to stick together. Take care of one another. Kind of similar to Asian heritage, where the younger siblings take care of the older generations. That's one factor that plays into why we're together…It's just that as an immigrant family we feel more comfortable sticking together and living in one household. Financially as well. For everyone it's easier.

He described food, family, and hospitality as cornerstones of his Mexican culture.

> I always have a sense of hospitality in my house. And I feel like that's something that I subconsciously picked up when I used to live by myself…Every time my friends would go over to my apartment, I would always offer them food or something to drink. Take a seat. I picked that up from my family. If someone comes into our household offer them something to drink or make sure they're okay.

> However, Alejandro's family did not completely observe the cultural traditions of his Mexican heritage and have, since coming to the United States, departed from

celebrating all of the Mexican holidays and now count forgiveness within the foundation

of his family's own unique culture. He reflected on the forgiveness his mother had shown

himself and his other siblings, saying, "I think that's being driven or influenced by my

mom because my siblings put a lot of hardships on my mom, but my mom was always

very forgiving and very loving, which is pretty amazing considering the things that

happened."

Alejandro's mother played a prominent role in his life. Providing more than just

forgiveness, she had always made sure he felt loved. A memory from Mexico that he

would never forget is his mother bringing him *tortas* with beans, scrambled eggs, and

meat to his school. "My mom would come during lunch time and hand me a torta over

the fence. It was just so delicious! I know she didn't have to do that so it's an act of

love."

Alejandro's family had also changed the family dynamic that was passed on

through generations in Mexico. He acknowledged that his parents treated he, his brothers,

and his sisters more lovingly and were more "aware" of them because they wanted to be

different from their parents who showed "a lack of love." He also felt that his father had

broken through barriers of machismo that he saw existing in the stereotypes of Mexican

fathers:

> I just don't see the masculinity macho thing in my family…the men in my family,
>
> especially my dad, does not really portray that stereotype at all…My dad really
>
> cares for our family even though verbally expressing that…is difficult. We all

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express that to each other, but definitely through our actions…We know that we love each other, and we'll be there for one another.

Alejandro applied and received DACA in 2012. He acknowledged that although this offered him some protection for the time being, his parents and other siblings did not have this protection. He also worried that the current Trump Administration will end DACA permanently and in doing so would remove any security he has had with the status. He is also concerned that Congress may never pass the DREAM Act, cutting off any pathway to citizenship he may have. Throughout his years of leadership both in high school and in college, his immigration status weighed heavily on his mind and in his actions. This status had both created barriers for Alejandro and shaped a sense of purpose for his engagement and activism.

Before DACA and after DACA came into jeopardy politically, Alejandro felt he had to hide who he was from the world.

> My immigration background always forced me to have a mask and not reveal my
> true identity as an immigrant. And I think hiding that for such a long time—until I
> was in high school when DACA allowed me to be more open—and hiding that
> put a big weight on my back. Constantly having to hide my true identity.
> I would keep my identity as an immigrant a secret because I did not want others to
> know that I'm an immigrant because I did not have DACA, so I did not have that
> guaranteed safety of not being deported. So, I was not engaged in a lot of school
> activities or educational leadership until I got DACA because of my identity as an
> immigrant, being afraid that others would know that my family and I are

immigrants, and the fear of being deported. That played a role in what I wanted to be engaged in.

There's a point where DACA was introduced and it was new, so I felt very secure. And I felt I could be out there more because it was only going to lead to a path to citizenship, I thought it was just secure. So, after it was in jeopardy, my confidence decreased. So, I now have to think about: now. I have to take in consideration where I want to be and which leadership positions I want to be in. Which ones I feel comfortable and safe in. So, I think it depends on the audience. For instance, if I'm talking to a group of students who are immigrants, I would be more comfortable as opposed to talking to a white audience that I don't know, and I don't feel safe.

Being undocumented, however, had ignited a fire in Alejandro that had, though scary at times, made him into the leader he had become. In a commitment he made to both his community and his family who "sacrificed so much" for him to be educated in the United States, Alejandro decided to fight back against an undocumented status that would leave many completely distressed and depressed.

If I wasn't an immigrant, then I wouldn't be engaged at all. But because I'm in this circumstance, I feel the need to express my voice and have some influence in how things play out. And after that first incidence of sharing my testimony and seeing the type of influence a person can have, being involved made me realize that I do have a voice in the community. It made me more assured that I am part of my

community, not just here temporarily, or I might leave, but owning that. So now I place a certain expectation on myself to be involved.

My immigration background really plays a role in me wanting to do more. I have bigger ambitions.

Alejandro took his position and circumstances in life seriously. So much, in fact, that he put a great deal of pressure on himself to "do more" and be more than many who would see economics and immigration as barriers. Instead he thought of his circumstances, his family, and the history of his community and dug further into life. When asked if he felt he owed it to his parents to do more, he responded,

Definitely. Even though I know they'll be happy with anything I am happy with …Whatever I choose I know my parents will support me in everything, but now I put that pressure on myself. I've never felt any pressure from them, looking at our situation, I put that pressure on myself of wanting to go a little bit beyond.

It's internal and based on the circumstances that I'm in. It's myself that places those expectations on myself. I can't pinpoint the timeframe of where I got those expectations. But learning more about history and how people were engaged to change things in history, for example gain civil rights, learning about that created those expectations for myself. Because I'm in that circumstance. It affects people in my community, people who look like me. And I don't know, I feel like someone has to do it.

Most of Alejandro's experiences and thoughts regarding his past, present, and future have been filtered through his immigration story and his family's unique cultural

development. Even though he put incredible expectations on himself and is about to graduate from college, he continues to be discouraged by the state of politics in the United States and does not really know if he will be able to accomplish his dreams. In the end, without a path to citizenship, all of his dreams are in danger of ultimately being ripped away. Through his resistance, activism, and leadership, Alejandro does the only thing that is in his control. He hopes it will be enough to turn the tide for both himself, his family, and his community.

> It's critical that somewhere in my future, I would find citizenship in order for me to be at rest with my presence here. There's a lot of uncertainty of what my future holds because right now I have DACA and that's been a battle this last year. It's been going back and forth in the courts and with the Trump Administration. There's a lot of uncertainties and that's not just for me but also very important for other DACA students. I'm very involved with that community.

School experience. School for Alejandro mirrored his development as a leader. In elementary and middle school, Alejandro reported poor experiences that he later found important to his core identity and growth as a leader, in a similar way that a bad experience allows for lessons learned. However, it was not until he entered high school, in a school he felt significantly surpassed his early school experiences, that he began to exceed the low expectations his previous teachers had set for him and become the leader he is now. Becoming involved in his school, athletics, and his community, Alejandro graduated in the top fifteen of his high school class and earned several scholarships to college.

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I've been in Denver Public Schools since I was in first grade. My experience was a pretty poor educational experience honestly. I would say that the schools did not do a good job of serving me, of course I was taught some of the basic things, like math and reading, but I wouldn't say I got critical thinking skills.

Gaining critical thinking skills is paramount to Alejandro's belief about what a good education should be. Asked to define what a "good" student is, he responded,

Through the perspective of a school a good student would be someone that is compliant and follows behavioral policies. Learn the material that they are presenting and do good on tests. But a good student through my eyes would be someone that is passionate to learn new things, questions why things are the way they are. I think a good student really requires critical thinking skills.

He complained that his middle school experience did not produce these critical thinking skills and that it was not until high school that he began getting an education.

Our history teacher did not teach us anything, literally she just sat there, handed us some worksheets and sat at her desk the whole time. And, of course, because we didn't do anything, we were messing around most of the time. So, I did not learn history until I was in high school. I think generally, my elementary and middle school experience to my teachers was just a job pushing kids through.

In addition to not getting the education he thought he deserved at that point in his education, he felt his teachers generally possessed negative assumptions about he and his friends. Alejandro internalized these assumptions by thinking negatively about himself and his future.

Some assumptions, generally, from teachers that weren't that engaged with the students or passionate, those teachers tended to have assumptions of us that we weren't going to amount to anything in society. And I took that perspective from my friend. He was told by one of my teachers something along the lines of, 'Why are you even trying if you're just going to end up working at a fast food joint like Burger King?' I really internalized that for a while.

Things like that prevented me, in the long run, of having higher goals for myself, because I would always limit my dreams, I could never imagine myself being in the corporate world or being a manager or a CEO or something like that because of those assumptions that I've heard throughout my school experience.

Though he did not personally experience racially discriminatory behavioral practices because he "was very compliant" as a student and always got good grades, he closely watched his peers being excluded based on their behavior. In middle school he believed these practices were "just normal because up to then, that was just how students were dealt with, how the education system was."

Alejandro's high school experience was in complete contrast to his elementary and middle school experiences. It was here that Alejandro found new, "passionate" school leadership, teachers that connected and cared about him, and positive assumptions about what he was capable of. He began to get involved in school, in athletics, and in PJU. In high school Alejandro became not only involved, but engaged, and came to love learning.

When they taught me something…and when I got it, it clicked, and I really

enjoyed learning regardless if it was history or chemistry. Specifically, it would

be my history teachers, the ones that I really connected with. They gave me a

different history that I did not see before. And just learning something changed

my behavior and my mindset. And that transformation after you learn something,

it's just information and data, but it really influences you in certain ways.

Ms. Muňoz, a teacher of color, became his favorite teacher. She was able to

connect with Alejandro on another level and began to open up the doors to college which

he felt were shut off to him because of his immigration status.

My favorite teacher was Ms. Muňoz. She's the most memorable one because she

was of color…Some students would say she would keep it real. She would

connect with us because—I don't know how, but she seemed to connect with us

and our background more and that was very important because there's rarely any

teachers of color who we could share our experiences with, and she had a better

understanding of our backgrounds.

After class, she would always talk to us. She had that spirit of engaging with us,

and that's one thing that a lot of teachers failed to do is actually getting to know

their students. For instance, for myself, we would always talk about things that

interested both of us, which was the Chicano Movement. She would ask about

personal stuff. And then one concrete example is she would help me look for

scholarships. When I was a junior and senior looking for scholarships for college,

and I went to the college center after school, they gave me a list of thirty

scholarships of which one or two I could apply because of my immigration

background…She took time to look for scholarships I could apply

for…Observing her doing that was very significant for me because I knew that

she actually cared about my future.

School was and continues to be important to Alejandro. As he found his stride as

a student, he was also learning to become a leader. His experiences in high school

overlapped and strengthened his involvement in PJU. Together they helped a "compliant"

student begin to match Alejandro's definition of a "good" student.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos and the person I am today. Learning about PJU from a

guest speaker in Ms. Muňoz's class when he was 15, Alejandro got involved with them

after he attended a PJU meeting they had at the school every Wednesday. Though he

admitted he just went there because he "had nothing better to do that day," he found PJU

helped him reframe his experiences as systematic oppression and racism. PJU offered

Alejandro an avenue of involvement that would allow him to learn critically outside the

classroom and develop his leadership through skills such as public speaking and learning

to be a mentor. PJU challenged Alejandro to put himself in uncomfortable situations and

push himself in ways he never had before. At PJU Alejandro also found important

mentors and a space to be himself and connect to others like him. This ultimately helped

him navigate the barriers that came with his immigration status and led to other

leadership positions and community organizations. In the end, Alejandro believed that

joining PJU was one of his best decisions because it took his "path into a different

direction." When asked what he thought the mission of PJU was, he said,

I would say it's a community organization. The goal is to represent the concerns

of the southwest community and represent the voice of the Hispanic

community…It's developed into advocating for educational equity and

immigration rights.

PJU fueled Alejandro's desire to learn critical thinking skills and empowered him

through lessons of history, systematic oppression, organizing, and public speaking.

Creating a sense of greater self-esteem, it allowed him to think of himself as a leader in

his community and school. At PJU his undocumented status gave reason for purpose

instead of fear.

Being involved at Padres helped because learning about our history, learning

about oppression, the systematic institutions that create racism, learning all of that

and also being actively involved really empowered me. One of the memories that

empowered me was the first time we were advocating for a bill called *Breakfast

After the Bell*. That impacted a lot of students in DPS, including my school, where

the bill was to still provide students with breakfast even if they were to come late.

Knowing that I helped share my testimony and pass the bill helped empower me. I

do have a voice in my community.

Since then…I've begun growing more. Being involved with facilitating

workshops for large groups helped me grow as a public speaker and overall it

helped my self-esteem.

Most importantly is how it changed me internally, because after I became more

involved, I became more confident. My self-esteem went up. I felt I didn't have to

hide my identity anymore. I embraced my culture and my identity. Because prior

to that, that was one of the biggest issues that I was faced with internally, having

to hide my identity for such a long time. It pressed on my self-esteem and my

self-worth. So, it was very critical that I was involved with Padres because it

opened my eyes to a lot of things and helped me become a leader.

At PJU, he was introduced to Darren Cho, an organizer who would become his

first mentor. Mentorship became very important to Alejandro. He found networking to be

a skill that would help him navigate through high school, college, and several internships.

When asked what he would tell a student if he was a mentor, he responded,

If I were a mentor I would say be involved because through my involvement I've

met a lot of people who are just lending me a hand and I'm very appreciative of

that. Be involved, seek help, don't be afraid to ask for help, seek mentors.

Challenge yourself to be in uncomfortable areas where you're uncomfortable

because that will help you grow, and it will come easier to you.

PJU led Alejandro to an internship helping with restorative justice practices at an

elementary school. His experiences with Darren Cho and PJU aided him when it was

time for him to become a mentor himself by reaching out to kids with behavioral issues.

For instance, there was a student that did not complete his work. And he got really

mad because he was not able to go to lunch. And he was really frustrated running

around the classroom after everyone left. He was throwing a fit. I was called and I

got there, and it was really difficult to get him to talk to me. He actually ran

across the room when I approached him, and he would not verbally communicate

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with me, so I kept persisting. And the way I got him to talk to me was through a whiteboard, actually. Because he was writing on the board. So, I was able to use the board with him to tell me what happened. Because in restorative justice we're trained to really listen to the other person's story. So, I wanted to get what he said, show him that I really wanted to know what happened through his perspective. Give him a chance. So, he used the board to explain to me what happened. I was able to calm him down and he did his work and he was able to go to lunch.

So, that was a success story. But then it turned into a failure as well, because he only had five minutes of lunch left. He threw another fit. So, I had to do that process again. But that process was a lot easier than the first one because we built that relationship.

Like the internship, his involvement with PJU led to many other leadership and public speaking opportunities. He became known to both his high school teachers and his professors at the university as a student with a lot of passion who was not afraid to stand up and raise his voice when needed. At PJU he became a member who could get other students engaged.

We went up to, I believe, Alamosa—or it was somewhere in the mountains. We went up there because there's communities of students that are marginalized. And there's pockets of minorities that live up there. To support some of the jobs up there. But since they're a minority, they see a lot of racial injustice. We were doing a 'Know Your Rights' workshop. So, we were informing the students about their rights regarding their Amendment rights and also how to interact with ICE in

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case that were to happen. And I think just being up there, that was one of my

favorite memories because of the way I executed that presentation. You could see

that the students, they were really engaged. And afterwards, a lot of the students

came up to follow up and see how they could be more involved. So, preparing for

that one was really important, and it really showed because a lot of the students

were interested. And because of that, I think we got more students to be engaged

in the organization.

Finally, PJU offered Alejandro something more than leadership skills and

experience. They offered him a "space" to be himself and to connect with other students

like him.

I don't know if there's a name for it, but we made a space with everyone that was

there. We wrote down values that we appreciate in a space like that, like trust,

being considerate, and everyone put the values that they appreciate. We went

around, and we talked about those values, and together as a group, we agreed to

uphold those values. And it was like a restarted community.

There's definitely a lot of great memories in my leadership positions as well. We

went to California together, we went to different states to be a part of certain

conferences. But what I am most fond of is that space that we created…Finding

that space was very important.

"Stepping out of my comfort zone" and being at the forefront. Alejandro

challenged many racially charged scripts through his actions as a student and community

leader. His actions demonstrated a belief system that students have a major role to play in

creating educational justice. When asked if he felt he was an educational leader, he responded,

I would like to say so. I would like to say that since high school, I've been more of an educational leader. I've been more involved with programs, like more part of events at school. I've been around programs like Padres, and RISE at Metro, and Puksta which is a civic engagement scholarship. That's even more valuable than—well, I don't undermine the schools, what we learned in class, but being engaged teaches you a lot more in certain areas. How to be a leader. They place you in situations where you're out of your comfort zone. Whereas in class you know what's expected, to learn and take a test, in these other organizations that I've been involved with, they'll get you to public speak and facilitate workshops. You're engaged in the community more, so you have to think more critically about your role in your community. What you can do to progress those campaigns and do it as a team because it's a lot more difficult to just do it by yourself. It's a lot easier when you have that platform that helps you, puts you in those leadership positions. Because without Padres, I wouldn't be testifying at the Capitol or facilitating workshops around 'Know Your Rights.' I would call myself an educational leader because just over in the last five years I've been in those positions.

To him leadership meant "putting yourself out there." It was taking a risk for something more important than one's own security. A risk that was not only important to

one's self but also vital to others. In the end, he believed the worst that could happen was that he would learn from his mistakes.

> Leadership means stepping out of my comfort zone and conquering something that makes me nervous or makes me not want to do it because I know either I might mess up or it might make me look bad in front of others. Failing in front of others or failing in general. For me, leadership is being able to take that risk and see what you can learn from it.

Alejandro used history to make his point that students should be at the forefront of creating educational justice. He recalled a powerful story that demonstrated students were not only leaders of past movements, like the Chicano and civil rights movements, but were also significant to educational issues in the present day. His experience told him that students are just as powerful now as they were in those very critical moments. Fighting for equity in education and rights for undocumented students may, in fact, be his generation's critical moment.

> Youth have so much energy and power. And I think they've always been a big part in history around activism. I know around the civil rights movements a lot of students walked out because they saw a lot of injustices in their schools. And they were able to lead that just by walking out and showing rebellion. They were able to change a lot of things.
>
> And, even now, going back a year ago there was a couple more walkouts. One of them I recall and was a part of was around the DACA students. And I feel like students sometimes are undermined and their perspective doesn't really matter to

others. But being in that march you could see the passion. You could see the damage that was done to those students. Because a lot of the issues really affected them and their families. So, it was very clear why they were there at that walkout, around that immigration walkout. And I think it was such a wonderful sight to see all those students coming together. And even students that weren't affected by that issue supported their friends.

And one of the memories I have from that was another student, she was in high school. I never met her before, but I was chanting on the megaphone and she was very energetic next to me. So, I handed her the megaphone, and she started chanting as well. I'm pretty sure she's never done that before, but she kind led the crowd as well…It reassured me that students should be considered and they should be given more platforms, more spaces for their voices to be heard. And they should intentionally be placed in the forefront.

Theme Two: Understanding the Fight

      Recognizing systemic oppression and racism. Each of the parents and students were not only affected by systemic oppression and racism, as found in the inequities of the school system, but they were also keenly aware of these and the negative affects it was having on their families and community. Though PJU made this part of their political education and parents learned to question these systemic inequities, parents and students could also easily identify it in their neighborhood schools, in the way they were treated by some teachers and administrators, the quality of the educational content, and even the food served by the schools. This caused the parents to become extremely protective of

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their children and created a sense of urgency for both students and parents. Though some of the parents and students reported that school was a safe haven for them and that some teachers were role models and had positive expectations about them and their children, they still found that others had negative assumptions, and disparities between their community schools and other more affluent community schools were obvious. In most of these negative experiences, parents and students identified these as more systemic than personal. The recognition of these inequities made the reason for their activism concrete and achievable.

Yadira. Joining PJU at age 16, Yadira found tremendous purpose in her activism and spoke from the point-of-view of an experienced organizer who was on the path to become PJU's next Co-Executive Director. Reflecting on her unique perspective, Yadira discussed both her personal experiences as a student and the lessons she learned as an organizational leader.

I have come to know Yadira quite a bit throughout my time with PJU. As my main point of contact for the organization, she has been extremely supportive and helpful to this research. Once I learned about her story, I knew it needed to be shared. Yadira's unique experience encompassed the entire spectrum of student member and student leader to organizer and organizational leader. It is a transformational journey that has created the incredibly strong woman and leader she is today.

For our interviews I met Yadira at her office. She sat behind a light oak, L-shaped desk that was pushed up against a white wall. It was a comfortable and organized space. Her desk held her laptop computer, a small cup of coffee in a disposable brown cup, a

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water bottle, her purse that was decorated with a southwest pattern, and a gold framed desktop filing system. In front of the files, standing up against the wall, was a certificate in a black frame. On the certificate was a picture of 30 to 40 parents and students in red shirts posing as a group. Below the picture read, "Por su entrega, dedicación, y esfuerzo en luchar por un mundo mejor y mas justo para todos" [For your delivery, dedication, and effort to fight for a better and more equitable world for all]. Above her desk were three small posters portraying painted Mexican figures and scenes. One of the posters depicted the head of a woman with flowers in her hair, long drawn out cheeks, and large, sunken-in, dark eyes. It was similar to figures seen during El Dia de Los Muertos [The Day of the Dead]. Below the figure read, "I paint my own reality." Across the room on a whiteboard was a large sign on yellow poster board reading "¡Viva la huelga!" [Long live the strike!] in bold green lettering. Next to it was a drawing of a woman with glasses and long black hair with "La Maestra" [The Teacher] written below. The signs showed Yadira's support for DPS teachers who were planning to strike the next day.

Welcoming me into her office with a warm smile. She directed me to sit in a white plastic chair across from her. Yadira looked much younger than her reported age, but when she spoke, she seemed wiser than her years. Wearing a rust colored, V-neck, cable-knit sweater, and black framed glasses, she looked comfortable but professional with her straight, dark-brown hair parted to the side and swept back into a ponytail. Yadira started the interview relaxed and with confidence. She was direct, measured, and thoughtful in her responses. I found her to be both extremely intelligent and articulate as she relayed her powerful story.

Immigration and family options. Yadira was born in Mexico and raised

partially in California. Her family moved to Colorado for work when she was in eighth

grade. The oldest daughter of a single mother, she had three sisters and one brother. She

speaks Spanish and English fluently.

When Yadira was eighteen, her mother, who was pregnant with her youngest

sister at the time, was deported to Mexico. In 2013, Yadira applied and received DACA.

Though Yadira was born in Mexico, she came to the United States when she was only

three and considered herself a Chicana because she grew up in the United States and

identified more with the Mexican-American culture than she did with the Mexican

culture. Most of Yadira's family was also born in America after her grandfather came to

the United States as a *Bracero*. The Bracero Program was initiated by the *Mexican Farm*

Labor Agreement of 1942 and brought approximately five million Mexican men to work

many of the farms throughout the central and western United States. Though the Program

ended in 1964, many Bracero's remained in America with their families (Calavita, 2010).

Yadira's grandfather and his family settled in the Los Angeles area. As a United States

resident, he spent half of the year in America and the other half in Mexico. When asked

about her culture and her community, she said smiling,

> I love both of them. I love it because I feel like we have a really defined culture.
>
> There's a lot of traditions and beliefs and ways of doing things. And the sense of
>
> community, I think, is also really strong. We always look out for each other.
>
> We're always helping each other. So, it feels good to not feel alone even when

you are alone. Meaning, when you don't have an extended family you still feel protected and safe, at least that's been my experience.

When Yadira's mother was deported, Yadira was left to care for her younger siblings. Though her mother initially took her youngest siblings with her, she found there was too much of a cultural gap for the children to successfully live their lives in Mexico and returned the children to Yadira's care six months later.

> Initially, when my mom left, my sister and my brother, because they were the youngest, the plan was that my mom was going to take them with her. So, they did go with her and lived with her for six months or so. But they came back because it was too difficult. It was too much of a culture shock there. They had a terrible time at school in Mexico because their Spanish isn't great. So, I don't know. I guess they were too American for Mexican schools. And so, they didn't like it. They were bullied. And so, my mom—education has always been really important to my mom. And I think ultimately, she made that sacrifice. And to her, giving us an opportunity to get a good education here was more important to her than being with her kids, so she was okay with them coming back to come to school here.

After Yadira received her DACA status, she was able to apply for Advanced Parole which allowed her to leave the country and return. This permit made it possible for her to finally visit her mother and her youngest sister who was already ten by the time Yadira first met her. Upon her visit, she understood why her mother had sacrificed so much for her and her siblings.

And it was so interesting because I went back to where I was born, and where I grew up when I was little, little. But I didn't remember anything, so I just felt like I was a tourist. And at the time when I visited her, my grandpa was there too. And so, my grandpa took us around in the little town where he grew up, and he took us to visit his sister, my great aunt, and she has since passed away. When I met her, she was in her nineties. This little, old, old lady that looked exactly like the grandma from that movie Coco. She was adorable! So, my grandpa just took me around to all his favorite places, and I just got to see part of my roots and culture. I went during the holidays. So, I saw the Virgin Mary, and *Las Fiestas*, and everything. The carnivals. It was really special. It was really special and beautiful. And at the same time, it was very difficult because I saw the other side. I saw the poverty; just how different my mom and my family were over there. Our lives and the things that we have here that we take for granted that they don't have. So, for example, I went during the winter. They have no heater or anything. So, it's really cold inside. And they have little space heaters, but they really avoid using those because it's really expensive. Then the bill comes really expensive and they can't afford it. Or sometimes my mom would tell me that she would run out of money to pay for; she calls it gas but it like heats up the water to take showers, so you don't take cold showers. So, I actually got to see what that was like for myself when I was there. It happened once when I was there. Or just things like eating a good dinner or meat was something special. So, I saw all of that and I saw that lifestyle and how different it is. And so, it made me feel angry. It made me feel

guilty for the lifestyle that I'm able to have here. And so, it was really, I think, grounding and eye-opening. But I'm glad I was able to go.

When the Trump Administration ended the DACA program, Yadira felt threatened and was unsure of her future:

My personal hopes and dreams? Yes, for sure. I'm 33 and I still feel, because I just have DACA, I feel still stuck. I can't do some of the things that, when I was little, I would imagine myself doing right now. Like I would want to own my home and I'd be looking right now, but I can't do that. So, I sometimes also think about, God forbid, if I get pregnant and I have kids—I think of our own personal family story of family separation and that's always very triggering to me. And so, there's no way I'm going to relive that all over again, and I probably never will, but you just never know. It's this feeling of fear and unknown and just waiting around to see what happens this next year. And just kind of waiting around to see what the next election is and who the next president is going to be. And then before you know it, it's five years, it's been a decade, it's been two decades. So, a third of your life already and I see where my friends who are my same age that I grew up with, where they are in their lives. And then that's when you start seeing the differences.

These experiences have created a reason for Yadira's activism and work with PJU. She wanted to make sure both her family and other youth in her community were able to fulfill their dreams in a system that often set them up for failure.

I want my family to have options. I think a lot about my nephew who's seven. And my sister's still very working class because she just graduated high school. In her senior year of high school is when she got pregnant. And she really struggles. She has a very low-paying job. She's only worked at Subway, Walmart, those types of jobs. And so, she lives paycheck to paycheck and sometimes that's not even enough. I've had to help her pay her rent on some months. And I know what that could mean for my nephew? I mean, of course, I know what that means for her, but I know what that means for my nephew and his future.

My nephew is like the smartest kid. This past Halloween, he dressed up as a paleontologist. That's who he is, he loves science. He reads well above his grade level. He's so, so smart. I can see that he can have such a bright future. Then I think of all the systemic barriers that working class people face, and so I know my sister—what if he doesn't get to go to the best school because that's not where my sister lives? Or what if he doesn't get to have internships or something because my sister can't afford them? Things like that, that overtime do pile up and do put you at a disadvantage and that slowly but surely start breaking you. They start breaking your dreams, they start breaking your spirit, your will, your strength. And I see that in a lot of youth, that they do have these big dreams and these big hopes, and they have the talent to go along with it. And they're so bright and smart but the opportunities are just not there, and the options are not there. So, their only option is not go to college so you can work to help your family. Or go to college but you have to bust your ass and you have to do all these things and

it'll take you forever to finish. And then you kind of give up or you only get to go

to community college or whatever the case may be. But I want to break that cycle

of, 'This is the only option I have,' for my family and want them to have all the

options, and for them to be in a place where they can choose their path. They can

choose what their future can look like and they can just go for it.

Witnessing youth unable to secure their dreams, or even dare to dream, made

Yadira both sad and angry.

There's another memory that I sometimes tell a lot because, I think to me, it's so

representative of everything that I'm talking about, and it's like many years later. I

was already working here, and we were organizing to pass in-state tuition for our

undocumented students here in Colorado. That must have been 2010, 2011 or so.

And I was doing the legislative session and I remember one day—we did this in

coalition with many other organizations, so there was a lot of people involved and

it sort of became a movement—we decided to do a direct action, so we were

going to take a bunch of high schoolers and middle schoolers to the Capitol and

we were going to have a little rally and then we were going to lobby some of our

Representatives.

But to sort of have visual impact, we decided we were all going to wear plain,

white t-shirts and on the t-shirts everyone was supposed to write, all the youth

were supposed to write what they wanted to be. And I remember getting there in

the morning with the former organizers here with all of our t-shirts and the

markers and all our youth. And myself and the organizers were really excited about this sort of activity and action.

And it just very quickly just broke my heart because it took some of our youth so long to even put something down on their shirt, to even think about what they wanted to write. And I just sort of talked to them about what's going on. They didn't really have a vision for themselves. I think that they were at the point where they no longer allowed themselves to hope for something. And that wasn't all of them, of course. But the fact that there were a good number of them that really struggled to put something down on their shirt was just heartbreaking to me. I was just really upset and angry because, to me, that is the result of our youth just going through a school system, through community systems, through just society, in a way that breaks their ability to imagine something big for themselves. And I don't know, I just always remember that because it makes me really, really sad, but also really angry, and grounded about why I do this work. Because I want to get to the place where we can have a similar action, and youth are able to write down what they want, and it's big things. And they have a plan for them. And they feel, they genuinely feel like, 'This is possible for me. I can get there.'

School experience and the system. Though her family was experiencing the trauma of deportation, Yadira continued to push herself to attend college, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and Spanish from the University of Denver (DU). She credited many people for her success, but also knew it was primarily the dreams of her mother that made it all possible.

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And again, my mom, to her education is the most important thing. To her, I think education is very directly tied to being able to be truly independent and strong as a woman. I think like her life experiences that she's had with all her relationships have been very negative, a lot of violence. And from that, she's always told myself and my sisters, 'Above anything, do what you need to do to make sure that you can stand on your own two feet that you don't have to depend on any man, and you don't have to stay in any relationship because you have no other options. And the options all of that can come from education and go to school, and graduate, and make sure you're getting the job.' So, to her, those two are very tied together. And I think I grew up with that sort of mentality.

Yadira was successful in high school, and never really questioned her education.

Well, middle school, I think I was too young to know, have an analysis or anything. I just kind of went through middle school. It was fun. I had Home EC (economics) and I loved it [laughter]. And then I went to—and then at the time, DPS now has school choice. At the time when I was in school that was not a thing. So, everyone kind of went to the same schools from the neighborhood. You all kind of went to the same middle school, and then all of those middle schoolers went to the same high school. So that's what happened to me. I went to Skinner Middle School, and then I went to North High School. That was kind of a given. So that was never questioned. Is there another choice or is there a better school or anything like that? It was just what we did in the neighborhood.

And the first two years or so were fine. It was a huge, huge school. When I went

in as a freshman, my freshman class alone was 700 of us. So, it was a huge

school. You kind of just got lost in the shuffle. If you didn't do anything to bring

attention to yourself, no one really bothered you. And I think that's kind of how I

was. I just kind of went through the shuffle, and I got good grades. I was in

advanced placement, or not advance placement. Yes, advanced placement, but it

was called XX classes. So, I was in that advanced track, and tracking was really

big at the time. I think it still is in some schools. So, my peers that we were in the

same track, that's sort of who I went with from grade to grade. Even though there

were hundreds of other students, I never really interacted with other types of

students. I never really interacted with the ELA (English Language Acquisition)

students for example. It was very segregated in that way. And so, I never really

knew what the experience of other students was like. And so, I never questioned

my education because I felt that school was school for everyone and it was the

same.

Though she did not question things at the time, looking back on her school

experience made her realize it could have been much better if she had questioned both

her school and her teachers. She did not foresee that not questioning the system would

have a direct impact on her future.

A lot of challenges. A lot of challenges from feeling almost invisible to—for

example, I think I was a junior and I had a math class. I think it was trigonometry

or something like that. I can't remember. I remember it was the period right after

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lunch. It was a small class to begin with. There was only ten of us in there, but we would show up to the class and the teacher would never teach anything. He would just sit behind his desk and tell personal stories about him, and his car, and his family. And every now and then he'd be like, 'Oh. Well turn to page blah, blah, blah and answer the questions in the back.' He never actually taught a lesson, and it got to the point where some students would stop coming altogether. Some students would come and fall asleep, and he wouldn't care or do anything. And I just kept coming because I didn't want to be marked absent, but it was just such a waste of time. And to this day, I'm mad because I never—I never said anything. I never went to another teacher or the principal and complained or asked, 'Is this normal?' Or, 'Can I switch to another math class.' I sort of just let that happen, and I think that happens a lot that we just—young people, students just go through the shuffle. And sometimes it's a good shuffle and sometimes it's not. Because we're just so used to that being the way things are.

And so halfway through the semester, I think he got—I think the teacher got fired or something because we never saw him again and just got substitutes for the remainder of the year, which wasn't any better. But I think that's the challenge. You kind of don't like something, but you don't really question it, and you don't really complain most of the time, and you just let it be. And it's challenging because in the moment you don't understand the consequences, the impact that it's having on you. I had no idea that that was going to impact me when I went to DU and couldn't be in a math class. And I think that's the challenge of the lack of…I

don't know. We, collectively, we're not as vigilant about what students actually

walk into every time they walk into their school building. I don't know. It's a

collective challenge. I can't explain it, but I feel like there's not enough of us that

are watching and saying, 'That's not okay. It needs to be different.'

Yadira felt the school system was set up to assume the worst about racially-

minoritized students. She experienced this when she was first enrolled in middle school.

I mean, in my experience, the schools that I went to, assumptions that I or

students like me were going to be low-performing, or not smart enough, or not

capable enough, or making a lot of assumptions about our ability to take on a

certain level of work, or to understand certain concepts.

And I think that's why tracking sometimes exists. Because even when I got here to

Denver, and my mom went to register me at Skinner Middle School, they didn't

really tell her about ELA classes, or anything like that. And I showed up to my

first day of school, and I'm in an all-Spanish ELA class. And I just felt so out of

place. I was like, 'My Spanish sucks.' And I was there for like a whole week, in

part because I didn't speak up, because I didn't tell my mom, and my mom didn't

do anything about it. And the teacher kind of just saw a quiet girl in the back, and

made an assumption, I think. And it wasn't until they finally realized that, 'Oh,

she's completely in the wrong track,' that's when they switched me.

But little things like that. It happened again with several of my siblings, and then

it happened again to me in high school when I was placed in a lower-track math

class. I hated math, and I was placed in the really low track, so when I got to DU,

math was—I thought it was going to be the end of me. And I did everything in my power to avoid taking an actual math class at DU and there was an option to take—it was kind of like web design or something that got counted as math credits, so I opted for that because I tried being in a math class and I knew I was going to fail it, so I got out of that and got into the web design one to fulfill my credit requirements. But I just always go back to, if it had been different at North? If I would have said something, or if my counselor would have said something. If there had been some sort of intervention or extra support, would my experience then look different? And so, that's just like a very small, very concrete example, but that amounts to bigger things and when those experiences happen over and over and over and over again to our youth, it becomes a systemic issue.

Although Yadira thought she had some teachers that really cared about her and her future, she believed that having a caring teacher here and there was not enough to combat the systematic inequity she experienced as a student.

I definitely did have caring teachers, but I think that that wasn't enough. I think it's one thing to look at a young person or group of young people and be able to identify their dreams and their hopes and their goals and empathize with their experiences and be kind of like emotionally supportive, but I think that educators especially have to go much more well beyond that, like your emotional support is never going to be enough because we all live in a systemic system and we're all going through an education system that from the very beginning, from its foundation, it was not designed for all people in the US to succeed. And so, you

have to do so much more and have be much more active to break some of those

cycles and to undo some of those systemic racism and systemic oppression. So, I

think that's what sometimes people don't understand, that you can have great

teachers that are very caring and loving and they have great relationships with

their students and their students' parents—I come across a lot of those stories of

parents especially, like they love some of their kids' teachers. They love the

personality, they love how they treat their kids, they love—sometimes they're

even the same ethnicity and that's enough for some parents and some people, but

then I start asking them, okay, what about the work? What kind of work? What

are they teaching your kids? What are they learning? What kind of homework are

they bringing home? And you start going deeper and then you sort of realize the

disservice because if you really, really truly genuinely cared and valued all

students in the same way you would challenge them all in the same way. You

would support them all in the same way and some even more. I think that's the

difference between equality and equity.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos and leadership. Upon joining PJU at 16, the

organization became a game changer in Yadira's life and supported her emotionally

through some very challenging times. Currently, Yadira is the Organizing Director for

PJU and oversees all of the campaign work in the field. She is also the main

organizational contact for other coalition partner organizations, schools, and districts.

According to other staff, and Yadira herself, she is on the path to become PJU's next Co-

Executive Director. When asked what she thought the mission of PJU was, she replied,

Our mission is to analyze the root causes of injustices, economic injustice, health inequity, immigrant injustice. All of the injustices that our community faces. Really understanding what the root causes of those are to then propose and work on systemic transformative change to get to those issues.

Yadira first met PJU when she was on her lunch break at North High School. PJU was surveying students about their desire to attend college. Not only did she take the survey, but she felt so passionate about the question that she joined PJU and began to help survey her peers.

At the time we had open campus, so we would go out during lunch, and this was kind of pre-gentrification, so all around North on 32nd, there were Mexican restaurants and taquerias. And so, food was really accessible. We would go out, and we were walking one day down 32nd, and there were some people from Padres y Jóvenes conducting a survey of the students that were coming up during lunch. And I remember, I was with my friends, and we sort of approached Manuel (a PJU founder), and Manuel was like, 'Hey, want to take this survey?' We kind of blew him off, like, 'No, thank you.' But we grabbed it and told him we were going to do it later. So, we grabbed it and went and had our lunch. And when we were at lunch, when we were eating, we were looking at the survey and I remember one of the questions very, very clearly. I will always remember it—it was this really simple question, which was, 'Do you want to go to college?' That's all it was. And it struck me at the time because I realized in that moment that I didn't know because no one had asked me that question before at school. And I

thought about it, and I thought about it, and I was like, 'I think—yes. I do want to go to college, but I don't know how.' And so, we started talking about the survey and wondering what they were doing and why they wanted to know these questions.

And on our way back to school after lunch, Manuel was still there, and we filled out the survey, gave it back to him, and he told us a little about what they were doing. He said that there were parents that were really concerned about some of the things that were going on at North—that they were seeing a lot of students out of school during the school day. They were just kind of hanging out around the park and just kind of ditching or whatever, and parents wanted to know what was going on. And so, we're like, 'Okay.' And then he invited us to a meeting.

And we went to the meeting. And then it was just so mind blowing because we talked about all the things that, I think, you wonder as a young person, but you don't have the answers to, and you always think that it's just you that thinks that. And then you come to find out, 'Oh, no. You're worried about the same thing. That the same thing's happening to your family.' And you see that it's a collective concern or a collective dream, a collective hope. And I loved that sense of collectivity. I liked how safe it felt, and I loved that I felt like I belonged there. And it wasn't until many, many, many meetings later and many PE (political education) sessions and many outings and everything, right, that I realized that I never had those feelings at school. I never felt like I belonged at school. It's not that I felt unsafe or it's not that I felt uncomfortable, necessarily. But I just felt

like I was going through the motions like a robot, and no one really cared enough

to check in on me or to ask me, 'Do you want to go to college? And if that's a yes,

let me help you figure how you're going to go to college.'

And then so as part of Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, we would go and visit other

schools. I remember we went to go visit Cherry Creek once. And it's just a

different world. We showed up to Cherry Creek. And first of all, it's a beautiful,

beautiful campus. And right away, you felt the difference in the relationships

between students and staff and their teachers. And we got to shadow some

students, and we would go to their classes and, and they had books, like they had

books to take home. And then we saw all the class offerings and they had

Engineering 101 or things like that, and I was just like, 'Oh, well we have

woodshop and stuff like that.'

And it was just like—so then that's how very slowly I began to really question my

educational experience and one thing led to another. And, well, here I am

[laughter]. Because I want to break that cycle of kids and students and young

people not feeling like they belong in school, not feeling like they're valued

enough, and feeling like their educational experience is theirs to shape, not

something that just happens to them, as part of being in this country.

They have choices. That they have choices and options.

PJU taught Yadira many things including "very straightforward skills like

planning, training others, doing presentations, [and] public speaking." What most

impressed Yadira, however, were the critical thinking skills and politicization she could

not get in school. PJU developed her leadership by getting her to push herself out of her comfort zone. They helped her begin to question her reality. Once she began to question things, they intentionally taught her step by step how to lead and make her leadership matter.

> At the beginning, it was a lot of pushing me out of my comfort zone. It was building my confidence and my self-esteem. My past organizers spent a lot of time, I think, doing that as we do today with anyone. Then it was a lot of very intentional training, both structured, actual presentations or workshops and let's all role play together to very unstructured ways like just one-on-one coaching. We rehearsed and practiced almost everything that we did. If we were going to speak at a rally, if we were going to be interviewed by a reporter. If we were going out and going door to door to collect petitions or we went to the juvenile court a lot those days to collect surveys. Anything that we did, we hardly ever went without sort of knowing what the plan was. Everything was very concrete. We were prepped. We practiced and rehearsed. We had materials. We helped develop those materials.

> PJU aided Yadira in transforming the way she saw her life, turning it into something she could suddenly control.

> Before I joined Jóvenes Unidos, I, as a student, was just—school was something that was happening to me. It was just a thing. I went to school every day and I tried my best, but I didn't really think much about it. And I definitely did not think that I had any control over it whatsoever. And I just thought like many students

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think, which is, 'It's just the way things are. It's the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it's always been. And I would just have to get through these four years, and I'll make the best out of it. And let's have fun when we can have fun, and that's pretty much it.' Yeah. I think that's what my feeling was beforehand.

And then after, as I got more and more engaged and I learned more and more about just the significance of education and the great disparities that existed, it just really deepened in me a sense of empowerment and a sense of urgency, and a sense of justice, like this is just unfair. And that feeling, when you have a sense of unfairness, you feel like something is unfair or unjust, it can drive you. And then you start seeing things much more differently. Yeah. I mean, it's a transformation for sure. It takes a while, lifelong sometimes, for many people.

Developing self-agency helped Yadira navigate through college successfully. These are skills she continues to pass down to PJU youth today.

I think a lot of youth that I've mentored and just kind of youth in—our youth in general--they're already very resourceful. I think that a lot of that partially comes from—I mean we always just have to hustle to get our stuff. So naturally, I think youth are very resourceful, but often times, I think the skill that isn't as strong is the skill to self-advocate. Self-agency. And so that's one of the things that I focus on. I've been an academic mentor or a mentor for young women, and we talk about—yes, we talk about their relationships. They're in middle school and it's crazy. And self-esteem and all of those things. But not a lot of programs, I think, at least that I've been a part of, talk a lot about that importance of self-agency,

self-advocacy, especially as you find yourself in spaces that are not what you already grew up with, what you're used to.

So, for me, for example, going from North to DU was a culture shock. It was so different, and if I had not gotten that coaching and that advice and those skills from here, the organization, my experience at DU would have been completely different. I would have gone in and I may not have graduated. It's like coupling the survival skills that our youth already have and come with and develop over time with the, 'How do you hustle in whiter spaces? How do you hustle in spaces where people with more money are, where the inner racism voices start speaking and start telling you, "I don't belong here. I'm not enough. I'm not smart enough. I'm not this. I'm not that".' And even though it's not conscious, you don't mean to talk to yourself that way, that all shows up. And so that's something that I really look out for, and I really mentor young people in how to survive all of that.

Though she loved working with and mentoring youth, she enjoyed working with the parents even more. She said, "I think I relate to them. They relate to me." Upon interviewing PJU parents it was clear they also cared very much for her and see her as a role model and friend. Ximena, a PJU parent, said,

Tengo muy buena relación con los de la mesa directiva o con Mónica, que en este caso es la líder. Sí. Formamos, aparte de una relación, vamos a decir, de trabajo, sino una relación de amistad. Y esa es la que admire. Y la quiero mucho. [I have a good relationship with those of the board of directors or with Yadira, who in this

case is the leader. Yes. We are, apart from a work relationship, have a friendship relationship. And that's the one I admire. And I love her so much.]

Yadira was most passionate about developing leaders and creating community. It did not matter whether they were parent or student leaders.

I am most passionate about the leadership development aspect of our work and the community that is built just very organically through our work. The really deep relationships that form, relationships of mutual support that form and just seeing the transformation that people undergo. And seeing those moments that we spend so much preparing for, we could spend months on end preparing for a moment that could last one hour. That moment when our members and our leaders come face to face with a decision maker or a person in power. That is to me the moments that we live for which is when two very different types of power come together and face each other off. It sounds very dramatic. Sometimes it is, sometimes it's kind of boring [laughter]. But, yeah, just seeing the final outcome of all that prepping and meeting after meeting and all the research that we did and everything that it took to just get to one result of a campaign and then when that happens, that ends. Debriefing that with members you can really start to see their understanding of the organizing process and how excited they are to get to the next level and do the next thing. And then over time people, like going through those cycles over time, people begin to understand the longevity of this type of work. That it's a long-term struggle and that we may not even get there, and we may not even win in the time that there's still at school or their kids are at school.

We might get there many, many years after that but they're still in it. They still care.

Beliefs. Based on Yadira's personal experiences as a student and her leadership in the organization, she not only believed that students and parents were educational leaders and should be at the forefront of educational justice, but she lives this belief and fights for it every day. Yadira's definition of leadership mirrored PJU's fundamental belief that students and parents must be supported to be their own leaders versus PJU leading for them.

> To me, leadership means a lot of things. It's the ability to guide people, to offer a vision, offer a path. It doesn't mean that a leader has to have all those answers. Generally, I don't think any leader does. I think that's impossible, but I think a leader is not afraid to do what it takes to find those answers, get those answers. I think a really important part of being a leader in leadership is that as you are doing your work, you are making space for emerging leaders, that it's not all about you or just about you, that you know when it is time to step back and support the leadership of someone else, their development.
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> Yeah, I mean, [educational leadership] is the same thing to me with the added piece around the context of education being that there is space made for students and parents to be leaders. That, I think to me, if there are no parents, youths, students who are in leadership positions or in that sort of space, it doesn't feel genuine to me. Or not even just that, but I think it's problematic in that, I mean, I personally believe and the reason I've been here for so long is that those most

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impacted have to be at the forefront. And so, when that is not the case, you run the risk of solutions or work that you're doing not really being grounded in the real conditions and real needs and the real vision for people, for communities, so that would be the only added piece.

Yadira's definition of leadership expressed the rights to which she felt students and parents were entitled. She understood her personal journey had led her to expect and fight for those rights and it was important to her to help others on their journey as well.

I think we have the right to a high-quality education. We have a right to opportunities and high expectations and everything that comes with. I don't think that I had those rights, but through my involvement with Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, I feel like I was able to not just acknowledge and identify and understand that those rights exist, that they are my rights, that I can do something about that. But actually learning all of those skills and how to do that and then actually putting that into practice, I think, gave me such a sense of clarity about the world and about my placement in the world, and something that I can see in others, and I can see in other young people now, and I can see in parents and all the people that I work with and the community and everything. And so, I just work to replicate that over and over. In essence, that's my job.

When asked if students should be at the forefront of educational justice, she responded enthusiastically,

Absolutely. I mean, I believe it because I've seen it over and over. It's a model that we practice here at Padres. It's how I personally came to be an organizer. I think

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it's important and powerful because youth are the ones that are most impacted that are primarily experiencing the education system. And they're also, I think, less fearful and could have more ownership of what change or reform or redesign, however you want to call it, could mean.

I think that not having them be an equal voice, and not having them be part of the process in an authentic way, it's very dangerous. And that what might be brought forward or what might be proposed as a solution, or even a process of prioritizing issues might be off if the students are not there.

To Yadira, leadership is a great responsibility which she did not take lightly. She believed that in order for students to participate in their role as educational leaders they must first engage in a process of politization, questioning, and learning.

I think, first and foremost, it all has to start with youth realizing their education or experience. That's the way school is. The way schools are run. The way that they are treated as students doesn't have to be the way it is. That there is possibility for change. And I think that in order to begin that process—it's part of the politicizing process—there's a lot of learning that has to happen. And that's part of an organizer's role, right, or a leader? It is all the learning that happens around the education system. How does it function as a system, right? Where does my teacher fall within the bigger ecosystem of a school district, a school? What can my principal control, and what can't they control? Who represents me at the school board? What does the superintendent do? How are budgets formulated, right? How do all these things that I have here at school—how are they paid for?

Who chooses what I learn every day? Who chooses those books? And what is that

process like? All of those things, I think, is part of the learning. And it's a very

credible step in youth being engaged and involved in organizing. And then, I

think there comes the next phase of directly engaging with those that are decision-

makers, whether that be their teacher or a principal or above that. And then,

learning how to be on an equal footing with them, what that takes.

Yadira's experiences uniquely qualify her to be the organizational leader she has

become and have allowed her to approach parents and students in an authentic way. By

taking the mantle at PJU, she not only believes that PJU is a leader in educational justice,

but with support, parents and students can also become great educational leaders in their

own right, with or without the organization.

Theme Three: My New Personality

A mechanism for personal transformation, belonging, and navigating

systems. In all of the critical portraits, personal transformation was a process that was

facilitated through parents' and students' involvement with PJU. Though their

background and the identification of systematic inequities fueled their obligation for their

activism, PJU gave them the tools to further define, critically reflect on, and act against

the oppression they faced. This also helped them create self-agency and transformed

them from becoming "compliant" parents and students to becoming activists who thought

critically and began questioning their world. More than just politicization however,

parents and students found a home and a community in PJU. This gave them confidence

in the knowledge that they were not alone in their thoughts and feelings, discovering that

collectively they could create change in their community and schools. With the help of PJU, they made the extremely important transformation of seeing their hurt not only in terms of their own personal oppression, but as something experienced by their entire community. It was no longer their own personal fight. PJU also showed them how to politically navigate the seemingly impenetrable systems they were up against and needed to succeed. For two of the students, Alejandro and Yadira, this included successfully navigating their way through college.

Miriam. A single mother of three grown children in their twenties, Miriam joined PJU when her children were in elementary school. All of her children went to DPS. Though her children are older now and two have moved back to Mexico, Miriam continues to work with PJU as a parent leader lending her expertise as an elder of the group with 15 years' experience as an activist. Miriam is an educator by trade and earned her bachelor's degree in Mexico, where she taught both elementary and high school students. Currently, due to her undocumented status in the United States, she cleans houses and sells food on the weekends to pay the bills and put a roof over her family's heads. She wants to return to college to earn her teaching degree in the United States, but her work leaves little room for school. During her interview Miriam spoke philosophically and often used the pronoun "nosotros" [we] instead of "yo" [I] to indicate she was speaking not only for herself but from the perspective of her community.

I met Miriam on three occasions. Once at the PJU office and twice at her house. Upon arriving at Miriam's house a few days after the New Year, Miriam's mother opened the door and greeted us. Upon coming to the door, Miriam welcomed myself and

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my interpreter Esther warmly, giving each of us a bottle of water. Though it was a modest house with two small front rooms, it was extremely warm, comfortable, and inviting.

Miriam was short in stature with straight, shoulder length brown hair that curled outward at the bottom. Her bangs were level with her eyes and swept over to the right side of her face. Miriam had a wide smile and sincere eyes that were welcoming. Without any makeup on she radiated positivity, wisdom, and grace. She was dressed casually in blue jeans and a long-sleeved, grey and black shirt that read "BLESSED" on the front in large, white pressed lettering. Throughout her interviews Miriam spoke in Spanish directly, but humbly as she often deflected the questions about herself to talk more about PJU and her community. We sat at a high table with tall, backless stools. Miriam sat calmly with her hands in her lap, rarely using her hands to express herself. Though Miriam was a bit reserved, her passion for her involvement in PJU was unmistakable and she spoke often about her personal transformation which occurred through her activism.

Community, culture, and the Christmas spirit. Miriam's culture was important to her as I could tell by her house that was festively decorated for Christmas. To the right of the door, in front of a large window with tethered, red curtains, was a medium-sized flocked Christmas tree with an assortment of red, green, and gold bulbs. Adorning the top of the tree was a large, ornate, silver star. Beside the Christmas tree was a large nativity scene featuring an infant Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and three wise men. Hanging above the manger from the barn-like structure hung a silver angel. Beside the nativity scene on a block shelf rested a large picture of the *Virgen de Guadeloupe* and a lit candle that filled the room with a warm aroma. Several rosaries were draped over the corner of the shelf

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and the statue of the Virgen stood above the candle looking on. Above the picture on the shelf was a larger picture of the Virgen on the wall framed in gold. The front room was lined with streams of red, tinseled garland, gold bows, angels, and large ornaments. To the right of the room, next to another window on the right wall, hung eight assorted Christmas stockings.

After the interview, Miriam told me that although in northern Mexico and the United States they celebrated Christmas with Santa Claus, in southern Mexico they gave presents instead on the Three Kings Day, which is the sixth of January. Because she and her family live in the United States, however, they celebrate both, thus the manger and the stockings. She also told me about a tradition, occurring February second, where she and her family have a feast and bake bread with a small baby figurine inside. Whoever eats the piece of bread with the figurine in it has to make the *tamales* next Christmas. This is significant because making the tamales is an all-day event.

Miriam described her community as friendly and hardworking, but unconsciously in pain because of the oppression they face. This made uniting within one community difficult. She enjoyed the unity of her family, however, through the celebration of their traditions.

Bueno, me gustria describirla como personas amigables - abiertas, trabajadoras - pero con mucho dolor escondido en su alma. Creo que inconscientemente todavía creemos que tenemos que defendernos y luchar, pero eso nos hace en ocasiones no ser Unidos y es difícil ponernos en el lugar de los demás. [Well, I would describe them as friendly people—open, hardworking—but with a lot of pain

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hidden in their soul. I think unconsciously. We still believe that we have to defend

ourselves and fight, but that sometimes causes us not to be united and it is

difficult to put ourselves in the place of others.]

School Experience. Her experience with DPS was overwhelmingly positive and

she felt that teachers had good assumptions about her children.

Con los tres pasaba lo mismo. Los maestros Siempre me felicitan porque son

niños inteligentes, dedicados, respetuosos. [The same thing happened with the

three of them. The teachers always congratulate me because they are intelligent,

dedicated, respectful children.]

Miriam noticed, however, that when she moved from one neighborhood to

another, the schools were not equal. Whereas one school had the resources they needed to

successfully educate children, the other did not. She could not understand why the district

continued with such disparities between neighborhood schools. This became the main

reason for her activism and involvement with PJU.

Pero al cambiar de vecindario, también vi que había diferencias, y no me

explicaba por qué. [But when I changed neighborhoods, I also saw that there were

differences, and I could not explain why.]

Cuando se trató de que el distrito apoyara escuela Fairmont, por el vecindario

donde se encuentra, creo que no tuvo ningún problema. Hubo todos los medios

todo lo que necesitaban para que la escuela tuviera un buen funcionamiento. Pero

cuando llego aquí al vecindario, y mucho más en lo que era la escuela Kepner, yo

veía que tenía la escuela necesidades y que yo nunca entendí porqué era tan difícil que el DPS pudiera suplir esas necesidades. Aquí me encontré con edificios viejos. O muy probable no es que no tuviera la preparación el personal - sino que eran salones grandes con un gran número de alumnos. Detalles como esos. [When it came to the district supporting Fairmont School, for the neighborhood where it is located, I think it did not have any problems. There were all the means they needed to make the school work well. But when I got here in the neighborhood, and much more in what was the Kepner School, I saw that the school had needs and that I never understood why it was so difficult that DPS could not meet those needs. Here I found old buildings. Or very likely not that the staff did not have the preparation—but that they were large classrooms with a large number of students. Details like those.]

¿Por qué a las escuelas de DPS se les apoya de diferente manera según el área donde se encuentra? Si se supone que el objetivo es que todas las escuelas públicas alcancen el mismo nivel, tan alto como se pueda. Con el distrito - no termino de entenderlo. [Why are DPS schools supported differently depending on the area where they are located? If the goal is supposed to be that all public schools reach the same level, as high as possible. With the district—I do not understand it.]

Another difference in the schools she could not understand was the prevalence of police from one school to the next. At her son's first school there were no police, but when they moved to a different, more under-resourced and racially-minoritized

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neighborhood, there was a significant police presence in the school. She could not understand why the police were involved instead of mental health professionals.

Aparte de las deficiencias materiales que vi en las escuelas aquí en el vecindario de la parte suroeste, de Denver, fue tanta interacción de la policía para que interviene para corregir la educación de los estudiantes. Y yo no me explicaba por qué si tan solo son niños. Son considerados niños y la policía, hay documentación de que interviene, incluso desde que los estudiantes de kinder con necesidades especiales. ¿Por qué el DPS, en lugar de permitir que la policía intervenga en cuanto al cuidado y educación de los niños, cuando están fuera de su casa, que están en las escuelas, por qué no proveen medios de profesionistas que trabajen en salud mental, en apoyos psicológicos, en otro tipo de apoyo que sabemos que ayuda mucho más y que forma un mejor ser humano? [Apart from the material deficiencies that I saw in the schools here in the neighborhood of the southwest part of Denver, there was so much interaction of the police that it intervenes to correct the education of the students. And I could not explain why, if they are just children. They are considered children, and the police, there is documentation that intervenes, even from kindergarten students with special needs. Why DPS, instead of allowing the police to intervene in the care and education of children when they are away from home, that they are in the schools, why do they not provide means of professionals working in mental health, in psychological support, in another type of support that we know helps a lot more and that forms a better human being?]

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She believed a good parent should be involved with their children and their

school, but as a single parent she could now understand how hard it is to be involved. She

also hoped that more immigrant parents without documentation would get more involved

with their children's schools. She believed that making these families feel safe should be

a priority for educators.

> Un buen padre es no solo poder suplir las necesidades de su hijo, sino también
> poderle brindar su tiempo, el mayor possible. Pero ahora que mi papel es de padre
> y madre para mi hija, comprendo lo difícil que puede ser para la mayoría de las
> familias. Sobre todo las de escasos recursos. [A good father is not only able to
> meet the needs of his son, but also be able to offer his time, the largest possible.
> But now that my role is father and mother to my daughter, I understand how
> difficult it can be for most families. Especially those with scarce resources.]
> Los hijos de inmigrantes indocumentados deben sentirse seguros. No solo el
> alumno, sino sus familias. [Children of undocumented immigrants should feel
> safe. Not only the student, but their families.]

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos and "mi vieja personalidad" [my old personality.]

When her children were in elementary school, PJU came to the school and talked with

her and other parents about the quality of the food in the schools. She was passionate

about this subject because she felt students deserved healthy food, not food that was good

only for "la basura" [the trash]. After this Miriam became involved with the group,

overcame her fear of public speaking, and for a while became the "voz" [voice] of PJU.

Within this role she represented parents as she spoke to school board members and state

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legislators. She credited PJU for helping her find her voice.

> Bueno, creo que cuándo ya no sentí el miedo de hablar. Pude ser voz de Padres Unidos. [Well, I think when I did not feel the fear of speaking anymore. I could be the voice of Padres Unidos.]

> Bueno, como madre de familia estaba yo en la organización frente a un politico o con un representante de la mesa directiva del DPS. Con toda la confianza yo podía decirle a ellos de lo que hablamos en Padres y Jóvenes, de lo que queremos en Padres y Jóvenes, y de cómo queremos las cosas. [Well, as a mother I was in the organization in front of a politician or a representative of the DPS board. With all the confidence I could tell them what we talked about in Padres y Jóvenes, what we want in Padres y Jóvenes, and how we want things.]

Though she used her voice to speak up for parents and was able to pull parents together for different PJU meetings and action related events, Miriam thought she was still in the process of becoming a leader. When asked if she thought she was a leader, she responded humbly, "Estoy trabajando en eso" [I am working on that.]

> Porque en realidad fueron muchos más de mis años con pensamientos de que las cosas no se podían. Que así era el sistema,que yo no lo podía cambiar. Que siempre está alguien más fuerte que yo. Y que debía callarme cuando alguien hablaba fuerte. Pero ahora creo que parte de la educación es terminar con falsas creencias. Que no es verdad que el que grita tiene la razón. Y creo podemos hacer, y que yo puedo hacer cosas de manera diferente e inteligente. [Because in reality there were many more of my years with thoughts that things could not be done.

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That's how the system was, that I could not change it. That someone is always

stronger than me. And that I had to shut up when someone spoke loudly. But now

I think that part of education is to end with false beliefs. That it is not true that the

one who shouts is right. And I think we can do, and that I can do things

differently and intelligently.]

When asked what she thought the mission of PJU was she replied,

Pues que es definitivamente una organización para educar. Educar

conscientemente a la comunidad sobre nuestros derechos y participación política.

Que Padres Unidos es una organización no solo para enseñar, sino también para

empoderarlos, para hacerles saber lo importante que es conocer sus derechos

como padres y en la comunidad. [Well that is definitely an organization to

educate. To consciously educate the community about our rights and political

participation. That Padres Unidos is an organization not only to teach but also to

empower them, to let them know how important is to know their rights as parents

and in the community.]

Miriam worked with PJU on their Health Justice campaign where she helped

expose disparities in the district's food services. They found that although student food in

the more affluent areas of Denver was cooked properly and was nutritious, food served in

under-resourced areas of the city was not. In correlation with this district campaign,

Miriam also aided PJU in lobbying the Colorado Legislature on a bill called *Breakfast

After the Bell*. This bill, which was passed in 2014, required all schools that have a Free

or Reduced Lunch rate of 70 percent or more to supply all of their students with a free

breakfast, even if the student came late to school. This became very personal to Miriam who witnessed an incident of a food worker refusing breakfast to a hungry student who did not have the 40 cents to pay.

Una póliza en la que no solo harían alimentos saludables, sino que todos los niños obtendrían este beneficio, porque el sistema en un momento fue tan cruel que los niños que necesitaban pagar cuarenta centavos por su desayuno, si los padres no podían pagar, tomaban el desayuno. De sus manos y lo tiraron a la basura. No se quedaron sin comer porque les di un sándwich de mantequilla de maní. Aquí tenía que ver a un niño llorar de hambre porque ese niño era alérgico a la mantequilla de maní. Y era lo único que podía comer porque su madre no pagaba su desayuno de 40 centavos. [A policy where not only would they make healthy food, but all children would achieve this benefit, because the system at one time was so cruel that children who needed to pay forty cents for their breakfast, if the parents could not pay, they took breakfast from their hands and threw it in the trash. They were not left without eating because I gave them a peanut butter sandwich. Here I had to see a child crying with hunger because that child was allergic to peanut butter. And it was the only thing he could eat because his mother didn't pay for his breakfast of 40 cents.]

Acting to create legislation became the most important part of PJU to Miriam. She learned she had a passion for policy making.

Pues cómo es que por medio de la educación, de retomar historia, nos llevan a la acción. Y con la acción, lograr ser escuchados y modificar o crear leyes que nos

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beneficien en las escuelas, sobre todo. La pasión de cómo y de qué manera. La

forma en que se presentan y nos involucran, no solo para hablar, sino para tomar

medidas para realizar el cambio y para transformar y hacer los cambios, no solo

para comunicarse sino para transformar parte del sistema y poder hacer nuevos

cambios en legislación. [Well, how is it that through education, to take back

history, they lead us to action. And with the action, achieve, achieve to be heard

and modify or create laws that benefit us in schools, especially. The passion of

how and in what way. The way they present themselves and involve us, not only

to speak, but to take steps to make the change and to transform and make the

changes, not only to communicate but to transform part of the system and make

new changes in legislation.]

PJU helped Miriam not only to begin to question the world around her, but also to

discover truths within herself and her own experiences. She described this transformation

as her new personality and her old personality.

Me ayudaron a conocerme a mí misma desde otro punto de vista y desde el punto

político que creemos la mayoría que no temenos. [They helped me to know

myself from another point of view and from the political point that we think most

of us do not have.]

Para despertar de mi forma de pensar llamo a mi vieja personalidad. [To wake up

from my way of thinking I call my old personality.]

Como le decía, al despertar de esa personalidad. Mi personalidad de política,

social sí, porque recuerdo mucho. La persona, que por profesionista que fuera--

Por responsable que fuera de mi trabajo, de mi casa. Yo no creía que pudiera hacer más por otros, no tan solo por mí. [As I said, when you wake up from that personality. My political, social personality yes, because I remember a lot. The professional that was responsible outside of my work, of my house. I did not believe that I could do more for others, not just for me.]

Me ha dado mucha seguridad para muchas cosas. [It has given me a lot of security for many things.]

Belief, rights, and "obligaciones" [obligations.] Miriam had an unwavering belief that parents should be at the forefront of education and that their voice and leadership was important to the education of all children, especially children in her community. She believed educational leadership was about having high expectations and inspiring students. She knew this was more than a role for educators, but an extremely important role for parents as well.

Para mí, es siempre tener altas expectativas. Decir, tú puedes. Si lo hizo alguien más, claro que tú lo puedes hacer.Y tenemos que encontrar todas las herramientas y lo necesario para llegar al máximo nivel de educación y desarrollo comunitario. [For me, it is always to have high expectations. Say, you can. If someone else did it, of course you can do it. And we have to find all the tools and what is necessary to reach the highest level of education and community development.]

Debemos de ser líderes. Bueno, por según mi experiencia con los grupos de niños y con mis propios hijos. Pienso que si los padres no somos buenos líderes dentro de nuestras casas - dirigiendo y mostrando el camino correcto a nuestros hijos - va

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a ser difícil que. Solo los maestros en las escuelas, por decirlo así, no solo un líder en una organización pueda lograr todo lo que se puede lograr. [We must be leaders. Well, based on my experience with groups of children and with my own children I think that if parents are not good leaders in our homes—directing and showing the right way to our children—it will be difficult for them to. Only teachers in schools, so to speak, not only a leader in an organization can achieve everything that can be achieved.]

When asked if she believed educational leaders must have a college degree, she answered with a memory of her father.

¡No, claro que no! Claro que no. Solo es, decir soy un buen líder porque con mi ejemplo le doy lo mejor a mis hijos. Los llevo por el camino, para que ellos ayuden a poder ser ayudados. [Of course not! Of course not. It's just to say, I'm a good leader because with my example I give the best to my children. I take them along the way, so that they help to be helped.]

Lo digo porque me siento que mi papa ha sido y sigue siendo un buen líder de familia y él no necesita de un título. Solo tuvo hasta el tercer grado de escuela primaria. Sí. Y nos pone el ejemplo porque él devora libros. Le encanta leer. Le encanta el conocimiento. Y lo refleja. Nada tiene que ver que sea un hombre humilde o de escasos o bajos recursos porque para mí es la persona más educada del mundo. [I say it because I feel that my dad has been and continues to be a good family leader. And he does not need a title. He only had until the third grade of elementary school. Yes. And he sets the example because he devours books.

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He loves to read. He loves knowledge. And it reflects it. He has nothing to do with being a humble man or one with few resources because for me he is the most educated person in the world.]

Bueno, siempre he querido más que ayudarles en las tareas a mis hijos, es inculcarles en ser seguros en sí mismos. Sí. Creo que en un niño de ahí parte todo. Sentirse seguro, porque sabe que es. Sí. Sentirse que son amados, cuidados, y respetados. [Well, I've always wanted more than to help my children with homework, it's to instill in them to be sure of themselves. Yes. I think that in a child there starts everything. Feeling safe, because you know what it is. Yes. Feeling that they are loved, cared for, and respected.]

Though Miriam believed students and parents have rights and she would fight for those rights, she admitted the idea of simply deserving rights was a strange concept and saw rights as reciprocal to "obligaciones" [obligations]. In order for a parent or a student to have rights they must accept responsibility for them.

Pues, mi derecho de estar informada, no solo de cómo es el progreso de mis hijos. Sí. Y de todo lo que involucre a la institución. Porque si lo vemos bien, yo siempre he visto que la escuela es la segunda casa de mis hijos. Entonces definitivamente es el derecho a estar informada de forma verídica, honesta definitivamente. [Well, my right to be informed, not just about how my children are progressing. Yes. And everything that involves the institution. Because if we see it well, I've always seen that school is the second home of my children. Then it is definitely the right to be informed in a truthful, honest way.]

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Es que, en el ambiente donde yo crecí, en realidad no creo que se hable tanto de derechos, sino de obligaciones. Aquí se nos da la oportunidad de tener la cercanía, de convivir, de apoyar. Pero tal vez para mi comunidad sea necesario primero educarnos. Para saber cuáles son las diferencias de que nuestros niños estén en una comunidad como esta. Las diferencias que hay en de dónde venimos. [It is that, in the environment where I grew up, I do not really think that there is so much talk about rights, but about obligations. Here we are given the opportunity to have the closeness, to live together, to support. But maybe for my community it is necessary to educate ourselves first. To know what are the differences of our children being in a community like this. The differences in where we come from.]

Miriam's leadership story melded the traditions of her Mexican culture with the traditions of her new home and the home her children grew up in. She knew it would be hard living in America without documentation, but found she was also very blessed to be in the United States. Feeling this way did not discourage her from fighting for her children, their education, and the new community of which she was a part. Her challenges have only given her more purpose.

Ximena. A single mother of two, Ximena joined PJU seven years ago when her oldest son was in kindergarten. Earning several awards for her leadership and involvement in her children's schools, she has always been conscientious of her children's education. Working for the last two years in a non-profit, PJU helped her become active in not only her children's schools, but also in her community

The first time I met Ximena was on cold morning after a snow storm in Denver. She lives in the Westwood neighborhood in southwest Denver. Her modest blue house stood among other houses of the same size. The house was close to an elementary school and I observed a father walking his son to school. The little boy, who could not be much older than six, wore a large backpack that looked to be almost the same size as him. Opening the door, Ximena welcomed us with a mop in her hand and quickly mopped the entrance before me and my interpreter, Esther, walked in. I felt horrible about tracking snow onto her clean, laminate floor, and offered to take my shoes off. The entry way was filled with other shoes. She replied that it was not necessary and invited us to sit at a table on the far side of a large, warmly decorated front room. The room contained a large, brown, microfiber sectional couch that held several pillows and a blue blanket. Against a rich, red wall was a large flat screen television sitting on a black stand. Upon sitting down, I could see into a long, narrow kitchen that was filled with shelves of food and other cooking supplies. After the interview, when I asked to take pictures of Ximena and her house, she said that she was embarrassed that the house was not clean. On the contrary it looked very clean to me, and again I felt terrible about the snow on my shoes.

Ximena was powerful in her speech and very sure of herself. Though she did not like talking about herself, she became animated when she spoke about PJU and instances of her leadership. Ximena was 42 years old and was of average height. Her black, curly hair was tied back in a ponytail and a few thin streaks of grey framed her face. She wore large, grey oblong-shaped, dangling earrings that were embossed with an indigenous pattern. These matched her soft, grey, cowl-neck sweater. Though she thought that many

people saw her as serious and angry much of the time, she seemed to me to be pleasant and charming. She was very intelligent and engaged throughout the interview. I noticed that although she only replied back to me in Spanish, she understood much of what I was saying in English. Asking her to choose a name for her pseudonym, she chose Ximena because of its Aztec origin.

Immigration story and purpose for leadership. Ximena was born and raised on a ranch in Guanajuanto, Mexico. One of seventeen children, life was difficult financially, but her household was full of love. Her favorite memories were of large family holiday get togethers at her maternal grandmother's house.

> De mi cultura son las tradiciones, las fiestas, la comida, la música. Hay muchos, pero como familia y que siempre me va a marcar son las fiestas navideñas en casa de mi abuelita. Porque era el único tiempo donde nos reuníamos todos los primos y las tías. Y hacíamos mucha comida. Todos participábamos. Unos haciendo una cosa y otros otra. Y colectábamos muchos dulces en todo el rancho. Y nos duraba todo el año, hasta al año siguiente. [Of my culture are the traditions, the parties, the food, the music. There are many, but as a family and that will always mark me are the holidays at my grandmother's house. Because it was the only time where we met all the cousins and aunts. And we made a lot of food. We all participated. Some doing one thing and others another. And we collected many sweets throughout the ranch. And it lasted us all year, until the following year.]

Ximena had gone back and forth between Mexico and the United States several times since 1998. She returned to the United States permanently in 2005 and had both of

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her children in America. Three years ago, her husband was deported. After his deportation she was left to raise both her children on her own. Though she could have returned with him, their marriage at the time was rocky and she felt he had purposely made the bad decisions that got him deported. She felt that when he made these decisions, he did not care for himself or his family. She also worried moving back to Mexico would negatively impact her children. With determination she said, "Estoy bien sin él" [I am fine without him].

Although she knew she could also be deported at any time as well, and warned her children that this could possibly happen, she chose not to focus on it. Instead she focused on her life in America, and how she could make sure her children received a good education and become successful adults. Instead of focusing on deportation, her immigration status drove her ambitions to fight for her children and her community.

Tengo un poquito de miedo de ser deportada y dejar todos los sueños a medias. Pero intento no pensar en eso porque todos los días tengo que salir, tengo que trabajar y tengo que lidiar con ese tipo de situación, entonces trato de no hacerlo parte de mí. Y de hecho, yo a mis hijos desde que se fue su papá, yo les he dicho que yo también un día me puedo ir sin más. Pero siempre ellos saben y conocen la situación mía, pero yo le digo, 'Eso a mí no me detiene para seguir en lo que estoy.' Yo trato de siempre hacerle sentir que aunque yo no sea persona legal en este país yo voy a pelear por ellos porque estén bien y por mejorar mi entorno, mi entorno de aquí de la comunidad, que no me va a detener eso. Porque hasta ahora no ha sido un obstáculo - ni el idioma, ni la inmigración. [I have a little fear of

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being deported and leaving all dreams half-hearted. But I try not to think about that because every day I have to leave, I have to work and I have to deal with that kind of situation, so I try not to make it part of me. And in fact, I have been with my children since their father left, I have told them that I too can one day leave without more. But they always know and know my situation, but I tell him, 'That does not stop me from continuing in what I am.' I try to always make him feel that even though I am not a legal person in this country, I am going to fight for them because they are well and to improve my environment, my environment here in the community, that will not stop me from doing that. Because until now it has not been an obstacle—neither the language nor the immigration.]

She described her community as hard-working people whose main goal was to make money and then return to Mexico. To her, this was to their fault, however, because many of them did not seem to care as much about the community around them and how to make their lives better in the United States.

Yo pienso que mi comunidad es muy trabajadora pero de veces nos enfocamos solo en trabajar y tener dinero y no nos preocupamos por estudiar, por conocer nuestro entorno social y político. Porque creo que la mayoría venimos con el objetivo de regresar a nuestro país. Y con las necesidades que pasamos en nuestro país, nos enfocamos más en tener dinero para llevarlo. Pero cuando nos damos cuenta de que ya nos quedamos aquí por años, muchos año, muchos de nosotros no tomamos las oportunidades de estudiar y de envolvernos, más que nada, en las escuelas de nuestros hijos; creo que es bien importante. [I think that my

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community is hardworking but sometimes we focus only on working and having money and we do not worry about studying, about knowing our social and political environment. Because I think most of us come with the goal of returning to our country. And with the needs that we have in our country, we focus more on having money to take it. But when we realize that we are already here for years, many years, many of us do not take the opportunities to study and wrap ourselves, more than anything, in the schools of our children; I think it's very important.]

Though she was born in Mexico and wanted to preserve the ways and customs of her Mexican culture, she was torn because her children were American, and they had a culture of their own. Sometimes their culture blended easily with her culture and sometimes it was in stark contrast. She felt that through this process, her culture was often lost.

Sí, yo creo que nuestra cultura, de repente se pierde. Aunque nuestras generaciones todavía intentamos hacerles conocer a nuestros hijos nuestras raíces. Y seguimos peleando con dos culturas diferentes, porque ellos nacen aquí, y nosotros nacimos y crecimos en México. [Yes, I believe that our culture is suddenly lost. Although our generations are still trying to let our children know our roots. And we are still fighting with two different cultures, because they are born here, and we were born and grew up in Mexico.]

School experience. Educated on her family's ranch throughout her elementary and middle school years, Ximena's family sent her to school in the city for high school. Because the family was under financial stress and school was expensive, she was only

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able to enroll in a couple of high-school courses. She completed her education in the United States, however, by earning her GED, Ximena's own educational experience in Mexico was difficult, but she persevered and promised herself her children would have a better education.

Both of Ximena's children were in elementary school and attended a DPS charter school. Though her oldest did well in preschool, he did not have a good experience in kindergarten.

No tuve una buena experiencia con DPS (Denver Public Schools). Cuando mi niño iba al EC (Early Childhood Education), como es casi muy un poco independiente de las escuelas públicas, estuvo todo bien. Pero cuando entró a lo que fue kinder empecé a ver lo diferente que era porque había mucha disparidad entre niños que no habían ido al que nunca habían ido a un EC y a los que habían ido o sea, que llegaron directamente a kinder sin ir a EC. En el salón de mi niño, eran casi treinta y cinco niños en kinder. La mitad de ellos no habían ido al EC. Y mi niño era-- siempre me dijeron que era uno de los avanzados. Pero ese año - ese año se quedó estancado en lo que ya sabía. Porque en ese tiempo a la maestra le interesaba subir a los que estaban muy bajos. Y la maestra hacía lo que podía, solo eran ella y su ayudante. Aunque yo oganicé unas mamás para que nos fueran a apoyar con las lecturas de matemáticas para los que iban más abajo. [I did not have a good experience with DPS. When my child went to the EC (Early Childhood Education), since it is almost very independent of the public schools, everything was fine. But when he entered kindergarten, I began to see how

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different it was because there was a lot of disparity between children who had not

gone to an EC and those who had gone, who arrived directly at kindergarten

without going to EC. In my child's classroom, there were almost 35 children in

kindergarten. Half of them had not gone to the EC. And my child was…they

always told me he was one of the advanced ones. But that year—that year he

stayed stuck in what he already knew. Because at that time the teacher was

interested in raising those who were very low. And the teacher did what she

could, it was just her and her assistant. Although I organized some moms to

support us with the math readings for those who went below.]

Though she tried to help the teacher with the kindergarten class, she became

discouraged and began doing research to find another school for her son. Unfortunately,

she did not find another school in her neighborhood that, based on the school data,

seemed to be successful. Almost giving up, she started looking at private schools. Before

she could do that, however, she met PJU who showed her that a charter school was

opening in her neighborhood. After meeting the principal of the charter school and seeing

that that type of charter school had done well as a high school, she decided to enroll her

son.

Empecé a investigar de otras escuelas, porque yo veía que ahí no iba a avanzar mi

niño. Y aunque yo estaba constantemente yendo a los foros del superintendente

solo era como hablar, reunirse, comer y pasarla bien. Pero el tiempo que yo duré

yendo nunca miré que realmente lo que se hablaba ahí se plasmara en las

escuelas. Entonces, al hacer mi búsqueda para buscar una nueva escuela para mis

niños empecé a ver muchas opciones, nunca las de mi casa, cerca. Porque miraba las estadísticas que no estaban dando el rendimiento. Y dije, '¿Para qué lo voy a mover de una a otra igual?' También entró en mi cabeza meterlo a una escuela católica. Y también investigué ese tipo de escuelas. Pero en ese entonces, se iba a abrir una escuela STRIVE, que son semiprivadas. Y como ya sabía que en la secundaria sí estaban dando rendimiento ese tipo de escuelas y dije, 'Voy a meterlo aquí.' Y en la entrevista que tuve con la directora, me gustó mucho cómo era el plan de ella para los alumnos. [I started to investigate other schools because I saw that my child was not going to advance. And although I was constantly going to the superintendent's forums, it was just like talking, meeting, eating and having a good time. But the time that I lasted, I never saw that what was really spoken there was reflected in the schools. Then, when doing my search to find a new school for my children I started to see many options, never those of my house, nearby. Because I looked at the statistics that were not giving the performance. And I said, 'Why am I going to move him from one to the other?' It also entered my head to put him in a Catholic school. And I also investigated that type of school. But at that time, it was going to open a STRIVE school, which are semi-private. And since I already knew that in high school, they were doing that type of school and I said, 'I'm going to put him here.' And in the interview, I had with the director, I really liked what her plan was like for the students.]

When her son first began attending the school, she was thrilled to discover that he was finally moving forward appropriately. At the school, she found educators who

respected both her and her son. She felt his teachers cared about him and his future and there was good communication between herself and the school. Her son saw his teacher as a friend and Ximena felt welcome there. Though she was still concerned that there were too many students in one classroom, and other parents often did not participate, she was involved in the school "cien por ciento" [one hundred percent] and had created a group for mothers to help the teachers.

> Yo creo que para mi hijo, un maestro es el que le está enseñando todo lo académico, matemáticas, pero también es - pero también creo que los maestros, al menos en lo personal y con mi niño han sido más que un maestro, han sido como un amigo. Porque siempre están, '¿Cómo estás? ¿Cómo te sientes?' Y si hace algo bien, me mandan un texto y me dicen, 'El niño va muy bien.' Y se lo dejan saber a él con una nota. Y mi niño sabe que si él hace algo incorrecto en la escuela, los maestros me van a decir a mí. Y que si es algo que yo apoyo a los maestros él va a recibir la consecuencia que debe de recibir tanto en casa como n la escuela. [I believe that for my son, a teacher is the one who is teaching him all the academic, mathematics, but it is also—but I also believe that the teachers, at least personally and with my child have been more than a teacher, have been like a friend. Because they are always, 'How are you? How do you feel?' And if he does something right, they send me a text and they tell me, 'The child is doing very well.' And they let him know with a note. And my child knows that if he does something wrong in school, the teachers will tell me. And that if it is something

that I support the teachers he will receive the consequence that he should receive both at home and at school.]

When asked how she would describe a "good" parent, she replied thoughtfully,

Es que es difícil para creo que eso de ser una buena madre siempre yo siempre he creído que los niños no vienen con un instructivo y que uno comete muchos errores. Pero yo me voy a basar a lo muy poco que sé como madre. Yo creo que un buen padre es aquel que cuando tiene un hijo sabe todo lo que va a incluir ese hijo. Porque trae un hijo al mundo no es nada más de darle y protegerlo. Yo creo que como vaya creciendo el niño, uno también debe de irle dando esas herramientas. Pero nunca olvidándose de que el tiempo y el amor y dejárselo saber a él, para que él pueda ser no solo una persona intelectual, sino también un buen ser humano. Y saber que es un compromiso de continuar en su caminar. Porque llegan a una edad de secundaria y muchos de nosotros creemos que ya están grandes. Y es cuando ellos van a experimentar todas las cosas ellos van a experimentar y es cuando uno debe de estar más al pendiente de ellos. Y aunque yo no tengo experiencia ahorita de secundaria, pero la experiencia mía con mis niños es que siempre hay que estar presentes en algún evento de la escuela con ellos. Porque eso los hacen bien felices a ellos, cuando ven a los papás alli. Los hacemos sentir que son importantes para nosotros. Y yo creo que no debemos perder el-- no debemos perder el punto de que son nuestros hijos y no, nadie más que nos lo va a criar sino nosotros. Porque nosotros, en nuestro hogar, es donde reciben los valores. Y si no hay una conexión de la escuela hacia la casa ellos se

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pierden en ese camino. [It is difficult to believe that being a good mother

always—I have always believed that children do not come with an instruction and

that one makes many mistakes. But I'm going to base myself on how little I know

as a mother. I believe that a good father is one who, when he has a child, knows

everything that son is going to include. Because he brings a child into the world it

is nothing more than giving and protecting it. I believe that as the child grows,

one must also give them these tools. But never forgetting that time and love and

letting him know, so that he can be not only an intellectual person, but also a good

human being. And know that it is a commitment to continue in your walk.

Because they reach a high school age and many of us believe that they are already

great. And that is when they are going to experience all the things they are going

to experience and that is when one must be more aware of them. And although I

do not have experience right now in high school, but my experience with my

children is that you always have to be present at some school event with them.

Because that makes them very happy, when they see the parents there. We make

them feel that they are important to us. And I think we should not lose the—we

should not lose the point that they are our children and no, no one else is going to

raise us but us. Because we, in our home, are where they receive the values. And

if there is not a connection from the school to the house they get lost in that way.]

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos and the becoming of a leader. Before Ximena became

involved with PJU, she already had a reference for activism from her father who was an

activist in Mexico. When the farm her family worked and lived on came into jeopardy,

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and their livelihood was threatened, her father went to Mexico City and worked with an organization to demand the rights of his family to stay on the land. Looking back on her father's activism from her current point-of-view as an activist, she could now understand what he went through and why it was so important to him.

> Y eso me recuerda mucho a mi papá. Porque no lo entendí cuando fue al Mexico Districto Federal a buscar mejoras. No lo entendí hasta ahora que ya soy grande y hasta ahora que estoy más o menos desarrollado como organizador. En este punto, entiendo lo importante que era y ahora que estoy trabajando para ayudar a organizar, puedo entender su punto de vista y las cosas por las que luchaba. [And that reminds me a lot of my dad. Because I did not understand it when he went to the Federal Mexican District to look for improvements. I did not understand it until now that I am already big and until now that I am more or less developed as an organizer. I understand at this point how important it was and now that I am working in helping to organize, I can understand his point of view and the things that he used to fight for.]
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> Mi papá, igual, no fue a la escuela ni nada. Pero cuando empezó a conocer también una organización que venía de México, él empezó a involucrarse. Él empezó a ver qué se podía hacer más por el ejido. Y fue cuando viajaba a México y se quedaba allá en reuniones, luego venía acá con la gente del ejido y les decía, 'Pasó esto. Hay esto. Podemos hacer aquello.' Lamentablemente, la gente, a lo mejor por su humilde origen y por su falta de educación en la escuela, no le creía mucho. Pero él siempre estaba yendo a México y trayendo información de

primera mano; o sea, él no iba con cualquier gente, él iba directamente a las

oficinas grandes, agrarias. [My dad, like, did not go to school or anything. But

when he also began to know an organization that came from Mexico, he began to

get involved. He began to see what more could be done for the *ejido* (a piece of

farmland supported by the state). And it was when he traveled to Mexico and

stayed there in meetings, then he came here with the people of the ejido and he

told them, 'This happened. There is this. We can do that.' Unfortunately, the

people, perhaps because of their humble origin and lack of education in school,

did not believe much. But he was always going to Mexico and bringing

information first hand; that is, he did not go with any people, he went directly to

the big, agrarian offices.]

She first became aware of PJU when her son was going into kindergarten. A

friend brought her to her first PJU meeting. Although she did not see the value of PJU at

first, she soon realized that PJU was working to make schools better and could help her

locate a good school for her son. Doing most of the data collection herself, before she met

the group, PJU helped her make up her mind as to what school might be best. At the time,

Ximena and many other parents felt, based on the school data and the information they

heard from PJU, that charter schools were better than the DPS neighborhood schools.

Con lo que me decían y lo que hablaban sobre todo cómo se estaba moviendo el

distrito y cómo estaba formado y cuál eran las necesidades y los retos, entonces

yo dije: 'Okay. Yo no quiero una escuela así' Sí. Aunque ellos y muchos de los

papás que estábamos involucrados y estábamos involucrados en ese entonces,

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todos buscábamos escuelas charter, eso. Porque sabíamos, teníamos el

conocimiento de que esas eran las únicas que estaban funcionando, por lo que

Padres & Jóvenes también nos decían. [With what they told me and what they

talked about, especially how the district was moving and how it was formed and

what the needs and challenges were, then I said, 'Okay, I do not want a school

like that.' Yes. They and many of the dads who were involved and we were

involved at the time, we all looked for charter schools, that's it. Because we knew,

we had the knowledge that those were the only ones that were working, so Padres

& Jóvenes also told us.]

Now however, Ximena disagrees with the DPS decision to make many of the new

schools charter schools and felt that Denver needs more successful neighborhood schools

that also successfully serve all students. This was PJU's current stance on the subject as

well.

Es que las escuelas semiprivadas, o charter, o como les llamen, no son para todos

los niños. Y no todos los niños son para ese tipo de escuelas. Tienen ciertas

normas que muchos de los padres se nos hace difícil o se les hace difícil seguir. Si

DPS ya tiene suficientes escuelas…lo que debe es mejorar las que ya tiene. [It's

that semi-private schools, or charter, or as they call them, are not for all children.

And not all children are for those types of schools. They have certain standards

that many of the parents find difficult or difficult to follow. If DPS already has

enough schools…what you should do is improve the ones you already have.

Mejor mejorar las que ya están en los vecindarios, darles herramientas, quizás
buscar modelos que estén funcionando. Y a lo mejor no copiar todo el modelo en
sí, pero sí por qué están funcionando, por qué están dando resultados e
implementarlo en las escuelas de los barrios de aquí de la comunidad. [Better to
improve those that are already in the neighborhoods, give them tools, maybe look
for models that are working. And maybe not copy the whole model itself, but why
they are working, why they are giving results and implement it in the
neighborhood schools here in the community.

Through working with PJU, Ximena realized her involvement would not only
help to make schools better for her son but would also make schools more successful for
other children in her community as well. She became passionate about creating great
schools in every neighborhood and recognized disparities between DPS schools from one
neighborhood to the next. When asked what she thought PJU's mission was she replied,
"Supongo que es criar líderes, trabajar con líderes, y promover la igualdad." [I guess it's
raising leaders, working with leaders, and promoting equality]. Ximena found her
engagement with the group exceptionally positive. She pointed to the fact that they taught
her many skills. This included giving her license to fight for what she thought was right,
no matter her immigration status or language. Though she might not have an official role
in the schools, she believed she definitely had a role to play in school leadership.

Aprendí muchas cosas. Aprendí a que aunque estés en un país desconocido y que
no sea tu idioma, puedes pelear por lo que crees que es correcto. También tienen
una visión de por qué hay tanta diferencia entre unos y otros...Que si nosotros

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queremos un cambio, es cuestión de organizarnos bien pedirlo y exigirlo. Nosotros tenemos derechos solo debemos conocerlos. Que debemos envolvernos en la vida de nuestros hijos. [I learned many things. I learned that even if you are in an unknown country and it is not your language, you can fight for what you think is right. They also have a vision of why there is so much difference between one and the other... That if we want a change, it is a matter of organizing ourselves to ask and demand it. We have rights, we should only know them. That we should wrap ourselves in the lives of our children.]

PJU made her involvement possible by offering her childcare during weekly meetings and trainings, and consistently communicating with her about upcoming events. More than just logistics, however, PJU taught her that not only was it okay to fight for her rights and the rights of her children, but it was necessary. Her activism was even more important because of her status as an under-resourced Latina immigrant with an undocumented status. They argued that because of this, her rights, as well as those of her children, were often pushed aside. Without raising her voice, no one else would be there to ensure her family's rights.

De dejarnos saber cómo podíamos organizarnos, cómo ser mejores líderes, cómo organizar a gente. Y también nos dejaba saber cómo era la historia de ellos y por qué se habían surgido Padres & Jóvenes. Y también nos enseñaban mucha historia para entender la disparidad de que siempre ha existido - la diferencia. Y de cómo la sociedad nos hace a un lado a las minorías. Y cómo entre nosotros mismos también nos podemos hacer daño. [To let us know how we could organize

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ourselves, how to be better leaders, how to organize people. And he also let us know what their story was like and why they had emerged Padres and Jóvenes. And they also taught us a lot of history to understand the disparity that has always existed—the difference. And how society puts aside minorities. And how among ourselves we can also hurt ourselves.]

A veces la gente que venimos de países con muchas necesidades llegamos aquí. Nos dan las sobras, o nos dan lo que les queda, o nos dan como quieren. Y la gente migrante cree que por ser inmigrantes no podemos pelear por más, no merecemos más. [Sometimes people who come from countries with many needs come here. They give us the leftovers, or they give us what they have left, or they give us what they want. And migrant people believe that because we are immigrants we cannot fight for more, we do not deserve more.]

Ximena became a powerful leader in her community. Her activism made her tremendously proud of herself. It also demonstrated to her that, with effort, her voice could not be ignored. It was at a DPS Superintendent's Forum where she first found her voice and discovered her courage to stand up when others stayed seated.

Recuerdo que una vez que tomé el micrófono para hablar en un foro del superintendente y como no estábamos yendo de forma muy amistosa por parte de Padres y Jóvenes, traté de sostener el micrófono con fuerza, una persona del DPS me lo pidió, y yo no lo solté. Aun no había hablado, así que no lo deje porque estaba decidida a hablar. Y solo se lo presté para que dijera lo que tenía que decir, y vi a la chica mirarme como si dijera: '¡Qué está pasando!' Aunque Padres y

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Jóvenes no era del agrado de ciertas personas, tenía que hacerse. Y estaba muy

nerviosa porque era la primera vez que hablaba en el foro del superintendente. Y

aunque en ese momento estaba nerviosa, después me sentí muy orgullosa de mí

misma. [I remember that once I took the microphone to speak in a forum of the

superintendent and since we were not going in a very friendly way on behalf of

Padres y Jóvenes, I tried to hold the microphone with force. A person from the

DPS asked me, and I did not release him. I had not spoken yet, so I did not quit

because I was determined to speak. And I only lent him to say what he had to say,

and I saw the girl look at me as if to say, 'What's happening!' Although Padres y

Jóvenes did not like certain people it had to be done. And I was very nervous

because it was the first time I spoke in the Superintendent's Forum. And although

at that moment I was nervous, afterwards I felt very proud of myself.]

Y yo creo que muchos se arrepintieron de no habernos dejado participar. Porque

de veces no creen que la gente tenga el poder de - o el valor - de hacer valer su

voz. [And I believe that many regretted not having let us participate. Because

sometimes they do not believe that people have the power of—or the courage—to

assert their voice.]

The Superintendent's Forum was only a beginning for Ximena. A few years later,

she led other parents in a school safety campaign that put pressure on the city to put in

new stop signs around the school and change a traffic light. Determined to make families

safe when they went to and from the school, Ximena petitioned the city relentlessly until

they finally made the changes.

Queríamos cuatro paradas en la esquina de la escuela. Y queríamos en la avenida

principal de Evans y Clay, queríamos un semáforo que diera tiempo a los

caminantes y los autos porque solo había un semáforo, verde, rojo y amarillo. Y

no había tiempo para los peatones. Y no hubo tiempo para que los automóviles de

norte a sur tomen a Evans de este a oeste. Yo y otra mamá fuimos las que

empezaron el movimiento. Siempre buscando eso, la seguridad de nuestros hijos.

Y aunque la ciudad al principio se mostró un poco renuente. Estábamos

trabajando con una persona de la ciudad que también nos apoyó mucho. Y no sé a

quién, le envié un montón de correos electrónicos. Y al cabo de un año

conseguimos el semáforo y las cuatro paradas. [We wanted four stops on the

corner of the school. And we wanted in the main avenue of Evans and Clay, we

wanted a traffic light that gave time to the walkers and to the cars because there

was only one traffic light, in green, red, and yellow. And there was not time for

pedestrians. And there was no time for the cars from north to south to take Evans

from east to west. Me and another mom were the ones who started the movement.

Always looking for that, the safety of our children. And although the city at first

was a bit reluctant. We were working with a person from the city who also

supported us a lot. And I do not know who—I sent a bunch of emails. And at the

end after a year we got the traffic light and the four stops]

Ximena's involvement in PJU meant more to her than speaking at forums and

putting together campaigns, however. To her, PJU became a lifeline during a very dark

time in her life. Her engagement showed her that she mattered to the world. This led her

to a job at a non-profit where she now works, and to a positive outlook on life. Due to this personal change, her children were able to see her as a strong woman with purpose.

Yo creo que en una forma no me dejaron conformarme con solo ser una ama de casa. Padres y Jóvenes me hacía sentir que yo todavía podía hacer algo, que todavía podía hacer un cambio en mí y en los demás. Y yo creo que el estar conectada con ellos no dejaron morir esa pasión que siempre he tenido desde chiquilla. Y me hacían sentir útil. Y que yo algún día podía ser parte de algo grande. [I believe that in a way they did not let me settle for just being a housewife. Padres y Jóvenes made me feel that I could still do something, that I could still make a change in myself and in others. And I believe that being connected with them did not let die the passion that I have always had since childhood. And they made me feel useful. And that I could one day be part of something big.]

Beliefs about leadership. Leadership for Ximena was weighted by more than just instances of leadership with PJU. It had instead become a way of life as she constantly questioned her experiences through a critical lens and determined what battles must be fought to ensure that she and her children obtained the life she now knew they deserved. In this way she interrogated many racialized scripts.

Liderazgo - creo que cuando ves una necesidad, un problema empiezas a analizar qué puedo hacer para mejorarlo. Y es también cómo vamos a movilizar a estas personas para un bien común. Creo que un líder es también uno que deja sus propios intereses para luchar por los intereses de los demás [Leadership—I think

it is that when you see a need, a problem you begin to analyze what I can do to improve it. And it is also how we are going to mobilize these people for a common good. I believe that a leader is also one who leaves his own interests to fight for the interests of others.]

When asked what rights she believed she had as a parent, she replied gracefully, but felt it was a strange question. Although she was specific and knew her rights, she believed that rights came with obligations as well. It was not enough to know your rights; parents must also work in concert with educators to fulfill their rights. A right could not be given without certain obligations.

> Mi derecho es a que reciba mi hijo una buena educación. Que se me de toda la información sobre él. Y también, mi derecho es a saber qué está pasando en relación a su entorno. Pero que yo diría que es más mi obligación como madre. [My right is for my son to receive a good education. Let me know all the information about him. And also, my right is to know what is happening in relation to their environment. But I would say that it is more my obligation as a mother.]

To Ximena, these obligations were directly tied to a parent's ability to be an educational leader. When asked if parents could be educational leaders, she replied with passion,

> Creo que sí. Porque si todos tuviéramos la misma visión de estar siempre, constantemente reforzando la educación de nuestros hijos e involucrados crearíamos niños más responsables, más sólidos, más comprometidos. Porque

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nosotros somos el ejemplo de ellos. [I think so. Because if we all had the same vision of always being, constantly reinforcing the education of our children and involved, we would create more responsible children, more solid, more committed. Because we are their example.]

Due to this obligation, Ximena felt that parents must be at the forefront of education, not because it is a parents' right, but because educational justice will and can only be created when parents and educators work together as leaders for a common cause.

Todos, en cierta forma, queremos lo que sea bueno para nuestros ninos y si estamos todos trabajando en una misma direccion, [remove no] haremos un frente común fuerte. Y si nos juntamos, nos reunimos, y hablamos, y llegamos a un acuerdo, todas esas personas que trabajan en educación, sacamos toda la educación adelante. Porque no hay nada imposible. Todo es posible cuando se quiere trabajar en común. [Everyone, in a certain way, we want what is good for our children and if we are all working in the same direction, we will make a strong common front. And if we get together, we meet, and we talk, and we reach an agreement, all those people who work in education, we get all the education forward. Because there is nothing impossible. Everything is possible when you want to work in common.]

According to Ximena, the unique skills she brought to educational leadership were her "coraje" [courage], her "pasión" [passion], and her compassion as a parent. She

wanted the best for her children and her community, and she was not afraid to raise up her voice to ensure that her thoughts, ideas, and beliefs would have transformative merit.

Creo que uno de los que tengo es el coraje. Una de las primeras que tengo es coraje. Y coraje no solo, sino para decir, 'Yo puedo hacerlo.' No tengo miedo de las cosas, ni de los desafíos si sé lo que voy a hacer, de lo que voy a hablar o de lo que voy a pelear, se puede hacer. No estoy limitado a que me digan, 'No. No se puede hacer.' Porque siempre, siempre hay una manera de alcanzar una meta. Porque cuando le dicen a uno, 'no puedes.' No me gusta que me digan, 'No se puede hacer.' Dime como puedo conseguirlo. Y habrá mucha gente que te diga que no. Pero hace mucho que he dejado de pensar en personas negativas. Y creo que también tengo mucha pasión que a veces no me trae muchas cosas buenas, porque no a todas las personas les gusta ser apasionadas. Y sí, me duele mucho el dolor de los demás. [I think one of the ones I have is courage. One of the first ones I have is courage. And courage not only, but to say, 'I can do it.' I am not afraid of things, nor of challenges, if I know what I am going to do, what I am going to talk about or what I am going to fight, it can be done. I'm not limited to being told, 'No. It cannot be done.' Because always, there is always a way to reach a goal. Because when they say to you, 'you cannot.' I do not like being told, 'It cannot be done.' Tell me how I can get it. And there will be many people who will say no. But I've stopped thinking about negative people for a long time. And I think I also have a lot of passion that sometimes it does not bring me many good

things, because not all people like to be passionate. And yes, the pain of others

hurts me a lot.]

Theme Four: Standing Up While Others Sit Down

Pushing us out of our comfort zone and the courage to raise our voice.

Though raising their voices represented a real risk to parents and students, they did it

anyway. Each parent and student, often with the help of PJU, found their courage and

their voice both individually and as a collective. They stood up when others sat down,

and although they continued to have some fear of the power the system held, they learned

to overcome it by allowing themselves to be uncomfortable and be pushed out of their

comfort zones. They knew they could be easily overlooked and dismissed. After all, they

had an undocumented status or were the children of those with an undocumented status.

But they did it anyway. Individually and together they challenged both school and district

administrators and argued policy with state legislators. Some even brought their voice to

the federal level and attempted to influence the Department of Education and the United

States Congress. Though they sometimes knew that the powers that be would continue to

ignore them, they raised up their voices anyway, and refused to sit down until they were

heard.

Lara. A protective mother of five children who range in age from 3 to 28, Lara

has been a member of PJU for eight years. A force to be reckoned with when defending

her children, Lara has become a passionate and determined leader in the fight for

educational justice.

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The first time I met Lara was at PJU's 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting. She came to the meeting with her three-year-old daughter. Smiling, she went around the room and greeted everyone individually. She is important in my memory of that day because she gave me a hug and made me feel very welcome to the group. Though she was the only person in the group who spoke only Spanish, Lara was exceptionally engaged in the meeting and effortlessly added her ideas to the group through an interpreter. She was one of the only members who spoke up consistently and, though patiently caring for her daughter throughout the three-hour meeting, made sure she understood everything. This included the political education discussing the One Percent in America and the group's strategic plan.

As she did in the Strategic Planning Meeting, Lara brought her daughter with her to all of our interviews as well. Her daughter was a beautiful little girl, with long, straight, brown hair tied back into a ponytail, and big, brown eyes. She was extremely well mannered for a three-year-old. During our interviews, she sat quietly playing games on her mother's phone and was unphased by the PJU office and the new people around her. It was obvious she was used to Lara spending time at PJU and was completely at ease with the PJU staff. When my interpreter, Esther, asked her what her name was, she precociously told her it was "My Little Pony."

Lara was a small woman with a warm smile. At 47 years old she possessed an unassuming, natural appearance. Lara wore her medium-length, straight, salt-and-pepper hair in a loose ponytail, and for a majority of the interview dressed in a zipped, dark-grey jacket. Halfway into our interview, however, Lara thought it was important to open the

jacket and show us her bright red PJU t-shirt underneath. On the shirt was a white outline of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl and white lettering that read, "La Educationes Liberación," and, "Education is Liberation." Though she was proud of her shirt, she quickly zipped her jacket back up as if she was cold. Lara was direct and intelligent in her speech and outlined both her resolve and humor as she told various stories illustrating her life, her beliefs, and her leadership.

Making a meal. Born and raised on a small farm in Guanajuato, Mexico, Lara spoke about her Mexican culture with a sentimental sweetness, describing a time when she celebrated a baptism with her family.

> Para mí, la cultura es aprender más sobre todo lo que es de mi país, cuáles son las tradiciones como el Día de los Muertos, cuáles son las tradiciones que tenemos culturalmente. El día de la buena noche - Día de los Reyes. Y las comidas que se hacen, no solo - bueno, desde mi estado, las tradicionales son las enchiladas, gorditas, mole. Hay algunos dulces que se llaman charamuscas. Vienen en forma de cráneos del esqueleto. Hay otros llamados alfeñiques, que están hechos para el Día de los Muertos. Dulces. Son figuras, calaveras, es decir de muchas figuras y son de azúcar. Y es lo tradicional que hacemos en mi estado. [To me, culture is to learn more about everything that is of my country, what are the traditions like the Day of the Dead, which are the traditions that we have culturally. The day of the Good Night—Kings Day. And the meals that are made, not just—well, from my state, the traditional ones are *enchiladas*, *gorditas*, *mole*. There are some sweets that are called *charamuscas*. They come in the form of skulls of the skeleton.

There are others called *alfeñiques*, which are made for the Day of the Dead. Sweets. They are figures, skulls, that is to say of many figures and they are of sugar. And it is the traditional thing that we do in my state.]

Un recuerdo que ese nunca, nunca, se me va a olvidar es que para un bautismo mi mamá fue invitada a hacer una comida. Y a mí no me gustaba cocinar, no me gustaba lavar trastes, pues no me gustaba hacer nada; Prefería irme al campo. Y una vez mi mamá me dice, 'Acompáñenme,' y fuimos a la casa de mi prima, donde mi mamá me preguntó si podía ayudarla a preparar una comida para el bautismo. [A memory that I will never, ever, forget is that for a baptism my mom was invited to make a meal. And I did not like to cook, I did not like to wash dishes, because I did not like to do anything; I preferred to go to the country. And once my mom says, 'Come with me,' and we went to my cousin's house where my mom asked me if I could help her make a meal for baptism.]

Y yo la acompañé, y entramos, y le dice, 'Tía, ya vino a hacer la comida.' [And I accompanied her, and we went in, and he said, 'Aunt, you came to make the food.']

Dice, 'Sí hijo,' dice, 'Váyanse, no se preocupen.' ¡Y ya se fueron a bautizar al bebé, y que mi mamá me deja ahí sola! Me dejó haciendo el arroz, me dejó haciendo el mole, me dejó cociendo el pollo, cosa que yo nunca, nunca había - Ni siquiera sabía cómo hacer un huevo porque no me gustaba ir a la cocina. [She says, 'Yes son,' she says, 'Go away, do not worry.' And they went to baptize the baby, and my mom leaves me there alone! She left me making the rice, she let me

make the mole, she left me cooking the chicken, which I never, never had—I

didn't even know how to make an egg because I did not like to go into the

kitchen.]

Y ya cuando llegaron, dicen, 'Ay,' dice, 'El mole quedó muy rico. ¿lo hizo tu

mamá, verdad?' [And when they arrived, they said, 'Ay,' he says, 'The mole was

very rich. Your mom did it, right?']

Le digo, 'Sí.' [I say, 'Yes.']

'Está muy rico. Tiene el sabor de tu mama.' ['It's very rich. It has the flavor of

your mom.']

Y dije, 'Yo lo hice y se están diciendo que ella lo hizo' [risas]. Y esta experiencia

nunca, nunca, se me olvida. No me gusta cocinar pero, pues, tengo que hacerlo.

[And I said, 'I did it and they're saying that she did it' [laughs]. And this

experience I never, never, forget. I do not like to cook, but I have to do it.]

"¡No lo voy a firmar!" [I will not sign it!] Because Lara only finished primary

school in Mexico, she was determined that her children would receive a better education

in the United States. She understood, however, that in order to ensure this happened, she

needed to be sure her children were treated fairly in a school system she believed was

often inequitable and racist. Doing this put her at odds with school administrators who,

she believed, were trying to intimidate her and were discriminating against her children.

The first incident occurred when her son, who is now nine, was in preschool.

En la otra escuela tuve problema con la directora. Mi hijo y otro niño se dijeron

una mala palabra. No sé quién dijo primero la palabra, pero los dos repitieron la

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misma palabra. Y la directora me llamó que fuera a recoger a mi hijo. Fui a la

escuela y le pregunté si el otro niño también iba a ir. Y me dijo que no, que nada

más mi hijo. Le dije, '¿Por qué?' le dije, 'Si los dos dijeron la misma palabra,

aunque uno la dijo primero y el otro la dijo después, pero los dos dijeron la misma

palabra. Los dos deben tener el mismo castigo, no nada más mi hijo.' Y dije,

'¿Por qué mi hijo solo va a ser castigado? ¿Porque no el otro niño es güerito de

ojos azules?' Y no me fui de la escuela. Me quedé ahí hasta que se terminó el

horario escolar. Pero ella anduvo pase, y pase, y pase, y pase en el pasillo. [In the

other school, I had a problem with the principal. My son and another child said a

bad word. I do not know who said the word first, but both repeated the same

word. And the principal called me to pick up my son. I went to school and asked

her if the other child was going too. And she told me no, that only my son. I said,

'Why?' I said, 'If they both said the same word, although one said it first and the

other said it later, but both said the same word, both must have the same

punishment, not just my son.' And I said, 'Why is my son only going to be

punished? Why is not the other boy, a little blue-eyed kid?' And I did not leave

the school. I stayed there until school hours were over. But she walked past, and

past, and past, and past in the hall.]

Ya después con el tiempo cada que me miraba en la escuela me decía, 'No puede

estar aquí en la escuela.' Y le dije que yo podía ir a la escuela el día que yo

quisiera y a la hora que quisiera porque yo tenía derecho de poder entrar a la

escuela. Y me dijo, 'Podrás entrar a otra escuela, pero a mi escuela no entras.'

[Later, with time, every time she looked at me at school, she would say, 'She cannot be here at school.' And I told her that I could go to school the day I wanted to and at the time I wanted because I had the right to enter the school. And she said, 'You can enter another school, but you do not enter my school.']

Y le dije, '¡No es tu escuela! ¡Es nuestra escuela!' Y empezó a decir unas palabras que no las puedo repetir. Y luego le dije, '¿Sabes qué? Tú trabajas para mí. Tu sueldo lo recibes con los impuestos que yo pago que pagamos todos los contribuyentes.' Le dije, '¡Ahí es donde obtienes tu salario, así que trabajas para nosotros!' Y me dijo que no me quería ver en su escuela. Ya después terminó el año escolar y al siguiente año que era mi hijo iba a entrar al kínder, lo metí a la otra escuela. [And I said, 'It's not your school! It's our school!' And she began to say a few words that I cannot repeat. And then I said, 'You know what, you work for me, you get your salary with taxes which I pay—that all taxpayers pay.' I said, 'That's where you get your salary, so you're working for us!' And she said she did not want to see me at her school. After the school year ended and the next year my son was going to enter kindergarten, I put him in the other school.]

The next event occurred when her two sons were in high school. Because of their absences, the administration wanted to put them on a behavior contract and demanded that she sign it and agree. She did not agree because she did not understand the contract which was made available to her in English only. After working with PJU to solve the issue, she discovered that similar instances occurred with other Spanish-speaking parents

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in the school as well. Due to this, she wanted to come together with other parents and sue the school district for discrimination.

En la escuela - a dos de mis hijos, no sé qué sea ese señor en la Lincoln, nada más sé que es el que dice que cuando los estudiantes faltan a algunas clases se los mandan a él, y ya él - se llama Mr. Garcia - y ya van a la oficina de él, los hace firmar un contrato, pero supuestamente el contrato es por un mes, o sea a ellos les dice que es por un mes, pero se los aplica todo el año. Y ese contrato tiene que firmarlo uno como padre y los estudiantes. Y yo le dije que yo no lo iba a firmar. Y como no lo quise firmar, le habló al asistente del director, luego le habló a otro. Y le habló al security, le habló a un policía que estaba ahí, y le dije, 'De todos modos no lo voy a firmar.' Y el policía me miró fijamente y yo dije, '¡No. Incluso si lo llevas a asustarme e intimidarme, no lo voy a firmar!' y no lo firmé. Y ya después de tiempo me di cuenta que ese contrato que él quiere que uno firme tiene que estar traducido en español, y no lo han hecho. Y a mí me dijeron que yo tengo, si yo quiero, puedo poner una demanda al distrito o a él porque él está haciendo eso, pero no los tiene en el sistema. Él nomás los tiene apuntados en un cuaderno. [At school, two of my children—I do not know what that man is at the Lincoln, I just know he's the one who says that when the students miss some classes they send them to him—he's called Mr. Garcia—and they go to his office, he makes them sign a contract, but supposedly the contract is for a month, that is, he tells them that it is for a month, but they are applied all year. And that contract has to be signed by one as a parent and the students. And I told him that I was not

going to sign it. And since I did not want to sign it, he spoke to the assistant

principal, then he spoke to another. And he spoke to the security, he spoke to a

policeman who was there, and I said, 'Anyway, I'm not going to sign it.' And the

policeman stared at me and I said, 'No. Even if you take him to scare and

intimidate me, I'm not going to sign it!' and I did not sign it. And after a while I

realized that the contract that he wants to sign must be translated into Spanish,

and they have not done so. And they told me that I have, if I want, I can sue the

district or him because he is doing that, but he does not have them in the system.

He just has them written down in a notebook.]

Defending her children's rights did not always include standing up to

administrators, however. It most often involved her taking responsibility for her children

and becoming what she defined as being a "good" parent.

Primero que nada que esté siempre al pendiente de sus hijos. Participar en sus

actividades de la escuela. Y apoyarlos siempre en lo que él necesite. Sea una

buena o una mala decision él es el que va a tratar las consecuencias. Pero como

padre, siempre apoyarlos. [First of all, always be aware of your children.

Participate in your school activities. And always support them in what they need.

Whether it is a good or a bad decision, he is the one who will treat the

consequences. But as a parent, always support them.]

In learning what support meant for her children, she found they often required

academic or literacy support as well as emotional support. Though she could not offer

this type of academic support to her older children, she had begun to take classes and

learn how to read with her younger children. She hoped reading would help them become

more successful in school.

Un día dijo una persona del distrito dijo, 'Si tú quieres que tus hijos sean unos

buenos estudiantes tú puedes aprender a hacer lo que hace un maestro. - con la

ayuda del maestro.' Dice, 'Puedes ayudar a tu hijo, y puede que él haga más

contigo que con su maestro.' Dice, 'Porque quizás haya más confianza contigo

que con su maestro.' [One day a person from the district said, 'If you want your

children to be good students you can learn to do what a teacher does, with the

help of the teacher.' He says, 'You can help your son, and he may do more with

you than with his teacher.' He says, 'Because maybe there is more trust with you

than with his teacher.']

Antes yo no me interesaba. Bueno si me interesaba pero no mucho. Yo no me

ponía a leer un libro con mis hijos. Y ahora sí me pongo a leer este libro con mis

hijos. Con ella, me pongo a leer libros. Y es lo que me ha gustado que ahora sí.

Me involucro con mis hijos. Me pongo a platicar con ellos de, 'Vamos a leer este

libro y ¿de qué se trata?' Dije, 'Yo nunca había hecho eso.' Y yo empecé a leer un

libro que me regaló mi hijo cuando estaba en el kinder. Ahorita mi hijo ya tiene

diecisiete años. Nunca lo había leído. Yo miraba ahí el libro, y luego un día lo y

me puse a hojearlo. No tenía muchos dibujos, pero se me hizo interesante. Se me

hizo interesante y me puse a leerlo y me puse a leerlo y decía, 'Hay otra página

más y otra página más.' Y hasta que me dormí a las tres de la mañana. Hasta que

terminé de leerlo. Y ahora sí ya me gusta leer con mis hijos. [Before, I did not

care. Well if I was interested but not much. I did not start reading a book with my children. And now I do read this book with my children. With her, I start reading books. And that's what I like now. I get involved with my children. I start talking with them about, 'Let's read this book and what is it about?' I said, 'I had never done that.' And I started reading a book that my son gave me when he was in kindergarten. Now my son is seventeen years old. I had never read it. I looked at the book there, and then one day I started to leaf through it. It did not have many drawings, but it was interesting to me. It became interesting to me and I started to read it and I started to read it and said, 'There is another page and another page.' And until I fell asleep at three in the morning. Until I finished reading it. And now I already like to read with my children.]

Pues, que me gusta ayudarle a mi hijo a hacer sus tareas, a leerle. Ella tiene apenas tres años pero con ella estoy trabajando. Ella toma un día por semana una hora de clase en la casa, y ya me pongo a ayudarle a hacer sus tareas que le dejan. Y me estoy enfocando mucho en ayudarle a mis hijos. [I believe, yes, that I need to prepare myself. My daughter is only three years old, and I sit with her to read to help her to learn. And I believe that yes, I need to prepare myself to help my daughter.]

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. PJU provided Lara an outlet for her passion as she became involved in several campaigns. These included testifying to both the DPS School Board and the Colorado Legislature regarding educational equity in school reform, teachers, school food services/health justice, school discipline, and immigrant student

rights. She became engaged after a friend of her son gave PJU her phone number and they asked her to work with them on campaign around student literacy. Of all the activities she had been involved with, however, influencing policy was her favorite. This included working with PJU to influence the passing of the *Asset* bill in 2016. This bill allowed Colorado's students with an undocumented status to pay in-state tuition for Colorado colleges. Before this, college was out of reach for many of these students because they had to pay out-of-state tuition. When asked what she thought the mission of PJU was, she replied simply, "Ellos lucha por los derechos de los estudiantes en las escuelas." [They fight for the rights of students in schools].

Lara was fearless in her pursuit of educational justice and found that PJU allowed her to use this courage at the district and state levels. To illustrate this, she recalled a time during PJU's Health Justice campaign where her and other parents and students exposed the disparity in the food the schools served. When DPS' superintendent refused to listen, they continued to push until he would finally hear them out and concede to their demands to change the quality of the food and how it was prepared.

> Mucho anduvimos peleando para que les mejoraran la comida a los estudiantes. Una muchacha les dijo a la mesa educativa que la comida en Kepner estaba muy fea. Los invitó a comer para que vean qué comida nos dan. [A lot of us fought to improve the food for the students. A girl told the educational table that the food at Kepner was very ugly. She invited them to eat so they can see what food they give us.]

Era la última reunión del año escolar. Y queríamos hablar con el superintendente

porque nunca nos dejaban hablar con él. Siempre nos mandaba una persona que

nunca nos dejaba llegar a donde estaba él. Y esa vez - ¿Cómo le vamos a hacer? -

porque no nos prestaban el micrófono. Miraban las camisas rojas y no nos

prestaban el micrófono. Y a toda la gente que levantaba la mano, le prestaban el

micrófono porque todas estaban felicitando, les estaban dando reconocimientos

porque habían ido todo el año, todo el foro del superintendente. Y a todos les

estaban dando, y que muchas felicidades por todo lo que hacen y esto y esto otro.

Y yo creo que de tanto y tanto que levantábamos la mano, y levantaba la mano

una, y levantaba la mano otra. Estábamos en una mesa. Éramos como quince

personas. Yo creo de tanto y tanto que levantábamos la mano se compadecieron

de nosotros y nos dieron el micrófono. Pero a lo mejor ellos pensaban que les

íbamos a decir lo que todas las personas les estaban diciendo, que muchas

felicidades por su trabajo que han hecho. Muchas felicidades por esto y por eso

otro. ¡Y sorpresa que no! ¡Nosotros íbamos a pedir que queríamos que se

mejoraran las escuelas porque allí el sesenta por ciento de los niños tiene

obesidad! [It was the last meeting of the school year. And we wanted to talk to the

superintendent because they never let us talk to him. He always sent us a person

who never let us get to where he was. And that time—How are we going to do it?

Because they did not lend us the microphone. They looked at the red shirts and

they did not lend us the microphone. And all the people who raised their hands,

they lent them the microphone because they were all congratulating, they were

giving recognition because they had gone all year, all the forum of the superintendent. And everyone was giving them, and that many congratulations for everything they do and this and this other. And I think so much that we raised our hands, and raised one hand, and raised another hand. We were at a table. We were about fifteen people. I believe that we raised our hands so much that they felt sorry for us and gave us the microphone. But maybe they thought that we were going to tell them what all the people were saying to them, that many congratulations for their work they had done. Many congratulations for this and for that other. And surprise that no! We were going to ask that we wanted the schools to improve because sixty percent of the children have obesity!]

Y nos prestaron el micrófono. Ya después una persona dice eso no lo deben de decir aquí, 'Eso me lo tienen que decir a mí para yo decírselo.' [And they lent us the microphone. Afterwards, a person says that they should not say it here, 'They have to tell me to tell them.']

Le digo, '¡No!' Le dije, '¡No, nosotros no queremos hablar contigo. Nosotros queremos hablar con el superintendente!' [I say, 'No!' I said, 'No, we do not want to talk to you, we want to talk to the superintendent!']

Y ya después de ahí dijo que él iba a hablar con nosotros. De allí nos fuimos a la Kepner. Nos acompañó una representante del distrito. Estaba también la encargada de los comedores de las escuelas. Y ya pasamos nosotros a ver lo que les sirven a los estudiantes. Estaba ahí la representante, bueno, la encargada de los comedores. Y le dice a una persona de Padres y Jóvenes que agarró su lonche de

lo mismo que comen los estudiantes. Le dice, '¿Por qué no se come su

hamburguesa?' [And after that he said he was going to talk to us. From there we

went to Kepner. We were accompanied by a district representative. She was also

in charge of the cafeterias of the schools. And we already went to see what they

serve the students. There was the representative, well, the person in charge of the

dining rooms. And she tells a person from Padres y Jóvenes that she grabbed her

lunch from the same thing that the students eat. She says, 'Why do you not eat

your hamburger?'

Y le dice la señora, '¡Porque tiene sangre la carne!' El pan estaba quemado. La

fruta, las peras estaban verdes. Todavía estaban muy duras. Las fresas estaban

congeladas. Las papas estaban-- ya yo creo las calentaban y las calentaban y las

calentaban; ya estaban tiesas. Y todavía nos decían que la comida era una

excelente comida en las escuelas. Pues, lo cambiaron, pero de todos modos la

comida sigue estando igual. Y estuvimos visitando algunas escuelas de donde

están los niños americanos, los niños güeros de dinero. Y sorpresa que ahí les

hacen la comida todos los días. Y acá nosotros no. Toda la comida viene enlatada,

congelada. [And the lady says to him, 'Because the flesh has blood!' The bread

was burnt. The fruit, the pears were green. They were still very hard. The

strawberries were frozen. The potatoes were—I think they warmed and warmed

and heated them; they were already stiff. And they still told us that food was

excellent food in schools. Well, they changed it, but anyway the food is still the

same. And we were visiting some schools where the American children are, the

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blue-eyed children of money. And surprise that there they do the food every day. And here we do not. All the food comes canned, frozen.]

Unfortunately, she felt that although they were able to get the district to listen, and the superintendent said they were going to change the quality and service of the food, the change never materialized and students in her neighborhood continued to be served substandard food.

Como le digo, que ellos siempre dejan todo en papel. Todas las promesas que hacen siempre quedan en papel. Nunca, realmente - allá. [As I say, they always leave everything on paper. All the promises they make are always on paper. Never, really...there.]

Though it is difficult to believe, because one could never imagine Lara being timid or nervous, she reported that before her involvement in PJU she was afraid to raise her voice.

Y yo tenía miedo pararme frente, hablar a una persona cuando hablar entre público. Me ponía nerviosa. Y me dijeron, 'No. Tienes que hacerlo, tienes que hacerlo hasta que lo pude hacer.' Ahora no me pongo nerviosa. Y antes cuando les estaba yo hablando, siempre estaba sí, agachada. Y ahora ya no. Ahora ya los miro a los ojos y les digo lo que les quiero decir. Y ya no me pongo nerviosa. [And I was afraid to stand up front, talk to a person when talking to the public. It made me nervous. And they said, 'No. You have to do it, you have to do it until I can do it.' Now I do not get nervous. And before when I was talking to you, I was

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always yes, crouched down. And now not anymore. Now I look into their eyes

and tell them what I want to say. And I do not get nervous anymore.]

In addition to finding her courage, she also passed down this newly found

fearlessness to her children who have also learned to demand their rights as students.

De la manera que puedo pelear por lo que mis hijos necesitan. Porque yo me

siento mas segura. Mi hijo que tiene nueve es. Él, tenía seis. No. Tenía cuatro

años cuando le dijo al maestro, 'Maestro, si tu quieres que yo te respete, tu me

tienes que respetar a mí. Cuando yo te hablo. Cuando tu me hablas, tu me dices,

"Mírame a los ojos cuando yo te hablo." También te pido por favor que me mires

a los ojos. Porque ese es el respeto, mirándome a los ojos. Yo sé que tu me estás

respetando a mi. Así como yo te respeto a ti.' [The way I can fight for what my

children need. Because I feel more secure. My son who is nine is. He, he was six.

No. He was four years old when he told the teacher, 'Teacher, if you want me to

respect you, you have to respect me. When I speak to you. When you speak to me,

you tell me, "Look me in the eyes when I talk to you." I also ask you to please

look me in the eyes, because that is respect, looking me in the eyes. I know that

you are respecting me, just as I respect you.']

Beliefs on leadership. To Lara, leadership was a necessity, not a luxury. Based on

her experiences she knew, without a doubt, that institutional racism was real, and her

children and her community would never obtain a just and equitable education with her

sitting on the sidelines. When asked if parents should be in the forefront of educational

justice, she emphatically replied,

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Pues, estar siempre en la lucha porque sino, nunca nuestros hijos van a tener buena educación. Hemos luchado mucho para que nuestros hijos tengan buena educación, pero lo único que está haciendo el distrito es estar cerrando escuelas convencionales y estar abriendo escuelas charter. [Well, always be in the fight because otherwise, our children will never have a good education. We have fought hard for our children to have a good education, but the only thing the district is doing is closing conventional schools and opening charter schools.] Porque, como le dije, el distrito para nosotros - los hispanos o latinos y Afroamericanos - ellossiempre nos discriminant. Para nosotros siempre en el suroeste o donde está la población más pobre. Siempre no tenemos buena educación. No tenemos buenos maestros. No tenemos buena alimentación. Y nuestros niños de tres años en adelante - no, de menos de cuatro años no pueden tener escuela de día completo. Son dos horas, dos horas y media. Pero en los lugares donde es la gente rica la gente blanca. tienen hasta a los niños de dos años ya de clases todo el día. Y a nosotros siempre nos discrimina el distrito. [Because, as I said, the district for us—Hispanics or Latinos and African Americans—they always discriminate against us. For us always in the southwest or where the poorest population is. We do not always have a good education. We do not have good teachers. We do not have good nutrition. And our children three years old and up—no, less than four years old cannot have full day school. It's two hours, two and a half hours. But in the places where the rich people are the white people,

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even the two-year-old children are already in classes all day. And we are always

discriminated against by the district.]

Julia. Speaking from the point of view of an 18-year-old high school senior, Julia

has been actively engaged in PJU for the past two years. During our interviews she

reflected on her involvement in PJU and her leadership in her school, her district, and at

the national level.

The first time I saw Julia, she was participating with PJU in the Martin Luther

King, Jr. (MLK) Marade in Denver. It is called a marade because it is both a parade and

march to celebrate and honor MLK. Under a beautiful, January "bluebird" sky Julia

joined thousands of others who marched three miles down East Colfax Avenue from

Denver's City Park to the Colorado Capitol Building. Walking alongside the MLK Early

College Drum Line, which led the Marade in its canopy of exhilarating, pulsating beats,

Julia almost disappeared into the crowd due her small stature. Wearing a pink knitted hat,

jacket which remained unzipped to reveal a baby blue Crested Butte, Colorado

sweatshirt, and jeans, Julia carried a large sign that was almost as tall as her. It read in

large uppercase purple lettering "I HAVE DECIDED TO STICK TO <u>LOVE</u>, HATE IS

TOO BIG A BURDEN TO BARE [sic]."

Although I had seen Julia that day, I never formally introduced myself, and met

her officially when it came time for our first interview. She confidently entered the small

PJU conference room and with a strong handshake she introduced herself and told me she

had "seen me around." She sat beside me at the large table that took up most of the space

in the room. Though she was composed, upon our meeting I could tell she was nervous

and crossed her arms when she sat down. As the interview went along, however, she began to relax as her arms moved to her side. She was a lovely young lady with straightened dark hair and a big smile that showed her braces. She looked much younger than 18. She was quiet and direct as she answered my questions, but when she laughed, she laughed with her whole body. Though tiny physically, Julia was a firecracker. Although she began the interview a bit reserved, she quickly revealed an incredible passion for activism and engagement as she told her story.

In between two cultures. Julia was the second oldest of eight siblings. She lived with her parents, all of her younger brothers and sisters, her uncle, and her dog named Coco. Julia was often responsible for watching her siblings. Her parents were born in Mexico and she is a first-generation American. She described her culture as both American and Mexican. Julia identified herself as a Latina and spoke both Spanish and English fluently.

> My culture, it's very different because I like to have traditions as Mexican traditions, but I was born here, so I started adapting to another culture. So, I'm in-between two cultures…I don't identify as one specific one, it's more like the line between two. I follow traditions from Mexican culture and American, I celebrate Cinco De Mayo and I also celebrate the Fourth of July and I just learned to adapt to both of them.

> When she was in elementary school, she had an experience that made her both curious and proud of the Mexican part of her culture.

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When I was in elementary, we did this festival and in that festival it was my first time seeing the Mexican dancers and that was my favorite memory because that's when I was introduced. Because I was born here but my parents were still raising me with their traditions and customs. So that was my first time exposed, 'Oh, that's so cool. I come from that.' Just seeing them dance. Just in the music. Just being present there.

School experience, racism, and activism. Julia had attended the same Denver charter school throughout her middle and high school years. She began attending the school when it first opened. Though she reported her experience was generally positive, she recalled that upon its opening, most of the teachers and administration had negative assumptions about the student body.

I feel like teachers thought we were wild, and I feel once our school started— since we're the leading class, they had us super under control, so many rules, so strict almost. And because they thought we're opening the school in a neighborhood where it's mostly Latinos, low-income families, we know that most of them—I think they have this idea of us being criminals and sort of like we have to have them under control. And that's why I feel they had those strict rules at first. Then, as years went by, they started to have less rules. But that's what I think they think about us.

The school's rules not only played out the educators' assumptions within a new school environment, but also developed into racist protocols.

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In middle school, I would always get in trouble for talking Spanish. I would get what they called refocuses, where you would have to stay an hour after school for doing a bad behavior. So, I would always be staying after school, for talking Spanish. Every time a teacher would hear me talk in Spanish, 'Oh, that's a refocus. Oh, that's another refocus.' It would get on my nerves. Why can't I speak Spanish? I grew up speaking Spanish. That's my first language. It would get me so frustrated, because most of the students there were Latino…We were controlled basically, and that really got to me…I didn't know why they did it. I was, 'Okay, that's the rules. I have to follow them.' But then, once I got into high school, we argued, 'No, we want to speak Spanish!'

Not being able to speak Spanish bothered Julia so much that as a high school student, she led a student protest that not only changed the rules but also caused the school to change their curriculum. After this, the school added a Latinx culture and history class. Julia was proud of this activism and knew that she and her peers positively changed the school for younger children like her brothers and sisters.

Speaking Spanish, that was a really big challenge. We basically protested. We demanded, 'Why can't we speak Spanish?' And they didn't change it until we got to high school, but I'm happy we did because now the middle school can talk Spanish. And I have siblings going into middle school and have more coming, growing up, and they're probably going to go to the same school. I think the students united really helped being able to speak Spanish.

During this protest, Julia found value in working alongside teachers and believed it was not only important to work with teachers toward creating educational justice, but also necessary.

> We got several students that disagree not being able to talk Spanish and went to talk to some teachers and they said, 'Yeah, we agree. We should be able to speak Spanish.' And then I think the teachers, when they had their meetings, they talked about it, and then they made a resolution, 'Okay. We're going to let them talk Spanish.'

Currently college bound, Julia wanted to study criminal justice because her cousin was incarcerated as a teen and she wanted to have an impact in helping adjudicated youth. Though she had not yet received any scholarships, she was determined to graduate from college and had applied to several schools, including two in Washington D.C. Knowing she made a difference in her school, she was confident she could also make a difference at the college level.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. At 16 years old, Julia joined her friends in a school walkout organized by her best friend and PJU. The walkout was designed to support DACA students. This was in response to the Trump Administration's actions to end DACA, which put many Denver students in jeopardy of deportation. Julia "felt so empowered" and "inspired" by the walkout that she decided to start attending PJU meetings. She said, "After that I loved it, so I stayed involved." When asked what she thought the mission of PJU was, she replied,

I feel like the mission is just to fight against structural racism, just to get around the laws that are there to oppress students of color or people of color and how it's impacting us and how we could get around that to have successful lives. I think that's their mission.

I think they just inform people about problems and if they are experiencing that, they give them resources to continue their lives, to have what they need in order to survive, to be in the environment where they feel comfortable. I think they're a great resource for people to reach out for help.

I like how it's all community development. We're all from the community. We're all experiencing this racism or this or that. And I'm so passionate about that because we're living it, so we're the ones that can make the change happen because it's impacting us, the community.

In PJU, Julia not only learned leadership skills, but she also learned how to be outgoing and how to organize using educational data and social media.

Well, they've taught me a lot. They taught me how to public speak. I'm still bad at it, but they pushed me to give…speeches and stuff like that. Because before I met this organization, I was like a shy little mouse. But I think I'm more outgoing now, for sure. They've taught me a lot about history that I didn't even know. But I've learned more here than I've learned in a classroom. How to organize. How to set up an action plan, media, how important media is to a campaign. They've taught me a lot.

At PJU, Julia learned to interrogate the status quo through questioning. In her reflection, she believed she transformed from a compliant student to one who questioned her education and her world. She felt this was her most important skill.

I don't know the method they use, but they're real about reality. They don't have nothing to hide. They're like, 'This is reality. We have the data here.' They taught me that—nowhere else I would have learned it if I didn't come here.

Changed me, oh, like a new view in issues because if I'm presented something, like an issue, I would look at it, and I'd think, 'Oh, that's the issue. Okay.' If a teacher was teaching me something, I would accept what they were teaching me, but I would never question it. So yeah. Having a more open mind of always questioning stuff or—Why is it like that?

Before I was with Padres, I would always question but in my head. I would never speak up. But once I got to Padres, I question it. I speak up. I'm more willing to have conversations with people about issues.

I'm always questioning everything they do because why? Is it for your interest? The student's interest? Why?

Though Julia agreed with everything PJU worked for, she felt comfortable in questioning the organization as well.

So far, I've agreed with pretty much everything they work for. If there ever comes a time or there is a time where I don't, I like how they're really willing to be open about it. Or if I'm misunderstanding something, they teach me or walk me through what I am thinking or what's this or what's that, and it really helps.

Through her experience in her activism, both before and with PJU, Julia believed it was much more powerful to approach those in power collectively, opposed to alone. She realized, however, that although working collectively and using her voice was impactful, not everyone would listen. Just recently, this was the case when Julia joined PJU in their campaign to change the federal guidelines for schools regarding behavior. As a response to the 2018 Parkland, Florida school shooting, the Trump Administration convened the Federal Commission on School Safety to decide what guidelines the department of education should recommend to states to keep students safe.

Julia delivered a speech to the Commission in Cheyenne, Wyoming. She pleaded with the Commission to recommend that money used for school safety go to supplying schools with more counselors and mental health resources, as opposed to arming teachers or inserting more police officers. In the end, not only did the Commission ignore Julia's plea, but they also reversed the previous guidelines that recommended schools use restorative justice practices instead of more exclusionary behavior policies, such as suspension, expulsion, and police involvement, which correlate with students dropping out and being involved in the school-to-prison pipeline. These were key issues that PJU helped develop during the Obama Administration. Beyond the effects to policy, these recommendations were personally insulting to Julia because they used a picture of her testifying on the front cover of the report, but did not include any of her and PJU's suggestions.

> When I went to Wyoming to give my speech on mental health instead of arming
>
> teachers, I felt like even though there wasn't a lot of youth in the room, I still felt

like my voice mattered because they started clapping after the speech. Okay, you guys are with me. I felt comfortable to share my ideas and what I thought school should look like.

So once the guidelines came out Miguel (a PJU organizer) messaged me saying, 'Oh, the guidelines came out and Betsy DeVos used your picture.'

And then I asked, 'Well, what did the guidelines say?'

'Well, what we were predicting—arm our teachers—put more police officers in schools.' I was shook. Why? Why would she do that? Those weren't my demands. Why would she use my picture and not my ideas? So, I was a little frustrated with that.

Julia found the same apathy when her and five other PJU students went to Washington D.C. to both protest the new guidelines and meet with lawmakers. Even though no representative from Congress came to the meeting, Julia still felt it was important to include the student voice in what seemed to be a one-way conversation.

I had a trip to Washington D.C. where we talked about our campaign of Counselors not Cops. And I was a little disappointed how we went to talk to Congress, but they never showed up, so we were just there. But at least we got our voices out and heard.

Undaunted, she believed that as a student, it was important to be a leader.

Don't let anyone get in between you and your goal. Just go with it. Just do what you have to do. If you don't like something, speak up. Because if you don't,

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nobody else will for you…Things are just going to keep on going how they are until somebody speaks up.

She was proud of what she accomplished and knew that other students found her "inspiring" because she was "working to make change happen." Lifting up her head with confidence she said, "They think I'm brave."

Beliefs about leadership. Julia had many beliefs about leadership. These included the importance of students' voices in fighting for educational justice and the belief that students should always be at the forefront of the educational justice movement alongside educators. In her leadership, Julia wanted to have an "impact on other people" and help people. "I just want them to have easy access to the world around them…For them to continue having a successful life themselves." When asked if students should work alongside educators for educational justice, she emphatically responded,

> Yeah. Because that's how you do it if you want a change to happen. That's how it occurs. In the example I gave you of not being able to talk Spanish, we all had to work together in order for that to change. So, it's different points of views, the students, the teachers, even parents, the principal. They all have their input. They all want different things to occur. So, in order to come to a compromise, you have to build all the ideas together.

In addition, she did not believe educational leaders must have a college degree, such as the ones educators have. "My definition [of leadership] was impacting others in a positive way, and to do that you don't need a degree. You could do that every day, anytime. Just make an impact on someone's life."

She believed that although it was important for all stakeholders to have a voice in educational justice, it was most important for students.

They have to speak to allies to contribute to educational justice. But the students, I think they play the most important role because they are being affected. Right? So, it's their experience. What's happening today. So only they know their point of view. The student voice needs to be heard.

Julia was wiser than many would credit an 18-year-old for being. She did not believe her job as a student leader was done just because she was graduating from high school. Although she saw leadership in educational justice as a journey with a destination, she knew the journey was long and change happens slowly. She was willing to wait impatiently for that change and do everything in her power to make sure educational justice happened not only for herself, but for her friends, her sibling, and for the next generation. She stated with determination, "I'm still here because nothing has changed and we're still waiting for a change to happen."

Miranda. Miranda is a 35-year-old mother of three. She joined PJU five years ago after she, and other parents, decided to take action against the principal at her children's school. Following the parents' lead, PJU helped the parents take their voices to the school board and the media, eventually leading to the replacement of the principal. Miranda's leadership helped recreate her children's school into a place where her community could feel both welcome and proud.

Miranda lived with her twin boys, older son, and husband in a duplex just west of lower downtown Denver. Down the street from their house was the Rudolph "Corky"

Gonzales Library and across the street was her children's elementary school. The outside

of the elementary school was adorned with beautiful, brightly colored murals illustrating

dancing figures, flowing hummingbirds, multicolored jellyfish, a man dressed in

indigenous regalia, and the head of a large painted llama. The murals filled more than

half of the red-brick exterior of the building. They seemed to represent a new beginning,

and the promise of a dream. Miranda said they were newly painted and donated from a

local group of artists called "The Raw Project." The new murals were appropriate given

the school had gone through many tumultuous years and was now becoming the

community school that the parents, children, and teachers all hoped for and acted to

ensure.

Though the weather had been exceptionally cold in Denver that week, it warmed

up by the time I went to meet Miranda. It was so warm in fact, that my interpreter, Esther,

left her coat in her car. Miranda greeted us with a smile at the door, and we walked into

what I can only describe as a purple showroom. Though the front room was small, it was

meticulously decorated as though it was a showroom inside a model home. All of the

purple, black, and silver décor was modern. Esther and I took a seat on the large, black

sectional couch which softened the corner of the room. Behind the couch was a large

mirror that reflected a small, black table filled with silver ornaments behind the door and

a large studded chair that held a thick, velvet, purple blanket. On the right wall of the

room was a large flat screen television on a black stand. The one window in the room was

draped with purple curtains that were pulled back to the side. Framed pictures of

Miranda's children and her husband adorned the walls. A large, dark-purple, shag rug

was in the middle of the floor, giving the room a soft border. Upon returning for our next interview, however, Miranda had completely painted and redecorated the room to be pink, white, and silver. She said she enjoyed changing the colors and decorations every couple of months or so.

Wearing a light-purple velour jacket that zipped in the front and dark-purple leggings with knee high black boots, Miranda matched the room in which we sat. Of average height, Miranda had long, straight, dark-brown hair that she had tied neatly into a ponytail. She was soft spoken, but became passionate when she spoke about her children, PJU, and how she helped lead her children's school in making positive changes. Miranda was quick and direct with her answers. She was seemingly guarded as she held a couch pillow to her chest during the entirety of our first interview. It was clear that Miranda's story was illustrated much more through her actions than her words.

After the interview however, and the tape recorder was turned off, she became more animated and excited as she offered us coffee and pastries and showed us two of her most prized possessions. From the next room she retrieved two framed pictures. The large one in a black frame held an award from PJU. Below a picture of Miranda speaking at a podium was bold lettering reading, "En honor a su liderazgo, pasión y determinación en el Movimiento para desmantelar las disparidades raciales en la Educación de la Primera Infancia." [In honor of her leadership, passion and determination in the Movement to dismantle racial disparities in Early Childhood Education.] The next picture was the size of a piece of paper in a silver frame. It was a child's drawing of a red stick figure with long hair speaking at a podium surrounded by nine other smaller black stick

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figures. Above the figure, in child-like writing, were two misspelled Spanish words, reading, "Sige peliando." [Keep fighting]. With a large smile and look of pride, she explained that her son had drawn the picture after she had testified to the DPS Board of Directors about the disparities and discriminatory actions of her children's principal. One could tell this picture was by far one of Miranda's most prized possessions.

Community and school needs

Miranda was extremely proud of her community and described it as one where families support one another and value family.

Mi comunidad creo que es una comunidad que le gusta apoyarse mutuamente. Nos gusta ser amables con las personas y somos muy amigables. Y también somos personas que fácilmente brindamos cariño a las amistades. Y nos gusta mantener a las familias unidas, convivir mucho. Nuestra familia es nuestro principal apoyo y nuestra motivación. [My community I think is a community that likes to support each other. We like to be nice to people and we are very friendly. And we are also people who easily give love to friendships. And we like to keep families together, live together a lot. Our family is our main support and our motivation.]

She was discouraged, however, about the gentrification that was occurring in her neighborhood. She was sad to see that many of the families were moving out because they could no longer afford to live there.

Los retos para que haya igualdad o equidad en lo que es nuestra comunidad creo que son el hecho de los cambios que están habiendo aquí alrededor. Estamos

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perdiendo muchos niños en la escuela. Y pienso que todo tiene que ver en lo económico, porque muchos papás ya no pueden quedarse en el área y tienen que irse. Entonces, por eso no tenemos igualdad o equidad a otros vecindarios donde están más adinerados, porque entonces nuestra escuela no recibe la misma ayuda. [The challenges for equality or equity in what is our community I think are the fact of the changes that are happening around here. We are losing many children in school. And I think that everything has to do with economics, because many dads can no longer stay in the area and have to leave. So, that is why we do not have equality or equity to other neighborhoods where they are more affluent, because then our school does not receive the same help.]

Though she had many successes in changing her children's school, she knew there was still much more to do to make her children's education equitable.

Pues, de mi experiencia con las escuelas públicas pienso que nos faltan muchos recursos para que nuestros hijos reciban la educación que merecen. Hay muy pocos programas para los niños; como después de escuela, no hay ninguna actividad. Y hay muy pocas escuelas que estén en color azul o verde, casi la mayoría están con bajas calificaciones. [Well, from my experience with public schools I think we lack many resources so that our children receive the education they deserve. There are very few programs for children, like after school, there is no activity. And there are very few schools that are in blue or green, almost the majority are with low grades.]

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. Upset by the state of their children's school and the leadership within it, Miranda and other parents turned to PJU for help.

> Yo llegué a ellos porque una maestra me dijo que existía esa organización. Cuando empezaron a haber los problemas con la directora y los maestros y la inconformidad que había con los padres, esta maestra me dijo que había una organización que apoyaba a los padres para hacer cambios en las escuelas y que ellos me podían ayudar a solucionar el problema. Hace cinco años, cuando esa maestra me dijo de esta organización, fuimos un grupo de padres y fuimos a exponer nuestras preocupaciones. Y empezamos a trabajar junto con ellos, y desde ese momento, pienso que fuimos parte ya de Padres y Jóvenes al buscar el apoyo. [I came to them because a teacher told me that there was such an organization. When there were problems with the principal and teachers and the disagreement with the parents, this teacher told me that there was an organization that supported the parents to make changes in the schools and that they could help me solve the problem. Five years ago, when that teacher told me about this organization, we were a group of parents and we went to explain our concerns. And we started working together with them, and from that moment, I think that we were already part of Padres y Jóvenes when looking for support.]

When asked what she thought the mission of PJU was, she reported,

> Para mí Padres y Jóvenes Unidos es un apoyo para la comunidad, para la comunidad y para los estudiantes. que quieren ver cambios en sus escuelas y de alguna manera, exigir al distrito una buena educación para ayudarnos a que haya

equidad en las escuelas y que se haga justicia cuando hay un mal manejo dentro

de los líderes en las escuelas. [For me Padres y Jóvenes Unidos is a support for

the community, for the community and for the students. They want to see changes

in their schools and in some way, demand a good education from the district to

help us have equity in the schools and that justice be done when there is

mismanagement among the leaders in the schools.]

PJU did more than just help the parents with their current situation, however.

They also helped create a community of leaders. Miranda recalled how introverted and

shy she was before she met the group. Without their support she would have never found

the courage necessary to lead parents against the principal and make articulate demands

to the DPS Board of Directors.

Pues, más que mis habilidades creo que yo aprendí con ellos, porque yo era una

persona muy callada, muy tímida. Entonces, prácticamente ellos me dieron las

herramientas para desenvolverme. O sea, fue más lo que yo recibí de ellos que lo

que yo aporté, más bien yo aprendí. [Well, more than my abilities I think I learned

with them, because I was a very quiet person, very shy. So, practically they gave

me the tools to get by. In other words, it was more what I received from them than

what I contributed, rather I learned.]

Me enseñaron a comunicarme con otros padres a organizer, a exponer, a hablar

enfrente del público. Y nos empoderaron a ser valientes, a hablar, a luchar por

nuestros derechos como padres a favor de nuestros hijos. [They taught me to

communicate with other parents to organize, to expose, to speak in front of the

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public. And they empowered us to be brave, to speak, to fight for our rights as

parents in favor of our children.]

Pues ellos nos ayudaron practicando; Practicábamos cómo exponer delante de un

público. Nos ayudaron haciendo investigaciones--en lo que pueden proveer de

nuestra escuela y el trabajo que se venía haciendo. Y Padres y Jóvenes, pues fue

un gran apoyo para nosotros. [Well they helped us by practicing; We practiced

how to exhibit in front of an audience. They helped us by doing research—in

what they can provide for our school and the work that had been done. And

Padres y Jóvenes, it was a great support for us.]

Through this work she began to understand the power of collective action and

found that once united, parents could create a voice to which the district would listen.

United, parents were unstoppable.

En ser la voz, en dar testimonio de que se pueden hacer cambios en la escuela

cuando los padres nos mantenemos unidos y luchando por un mismo objetivo. [In

being the voice, in giving testimony that changes can be made in the school when

the parents stay united and fighting for the same goal.]

Since joining PJU, Miranda went from being a shy parent who was unable to

make her voice heard to a formidable leader in the organization. When asked if she

considered herself a leader at PJU, she replied with confidence,

Sí, sí me considero. Porque ellos me han dado esa confianza, ellos han creído en

mis habilidades que ellos mismos me ayudaron a obtener. Entonces, Padres y

Jóvenes Unidos cuando necesitan apoyo saben que pueden recurrir a mí como

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padre líder y que podemos juntos hacer un cambio o trabajar en alguna meta que

se quiera lograr. [Yes, I do consider myself. Because they have given me that

confidence, they have believed in my abilities that they helped me to obtain. So,

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos, when they need support, know that they can use me as a

leader and that we can together make a change or work on some goal that we want

to achieve.]

Parent voice and the remaking of a school. The picture Miranda's son drew of

her was the culmination of several months of hard work by her, other parents, and PJU.

Seeing a problem in her school, Miranda and other parents did not merely let the issue go,

but decided to take a stand against a principal who had both created a hostile work

environment for teachers and was constantly disrespecting children and their families.

Pues, principalmente cambiar de director que era lo que estaba haciendo también,

que nuestros maestros se fueran. Y, pues, nosotros como padres no éramos

valorados y no nos sentíamos bienvenidos en la escuela. Tuvimos varias

presentaciones en la mesa directiva llevando nuestras quejas. Yo creo que fue más

por la presión que hubo, tanto de medios de comunicación y con la ayuda de

Padres & Jóvenes, que tuvieron que hacer el cambio, porque ellos estaban

renuentes. Hubo entrevistas con televisión. [Well, mainly changing the principal

that was what he was doing too, that our teachers left. And, then, we as parents

were not valued and we did not feel welcome at school. We had several

presentations on the board of directors bearing our complaints. I think it was more

due to the pressure that existed, both in the media and with the help of Padres y

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Jóvenes, who had to make the change, because they were reluctant. There were interviews with television.]

Pues la memoria que tengo, y precisamente de esta escuela, fueron los cambios que tuvimos que hacer como padres, la intervención que tuvimos que hacer para que nuestra escuela mejorara. [Well, the memory I have, and precisely this school, were the changes we had to make as parents, the intervention we had to do to make our school better.]

Miranda's activism was successful, and the principal was replaced. Miranda and other parents were involved in the hiring of the new principal and were now extremely happy with their choice. They were also pleased that the teachers who left their positions because of the old principal were now returning to visit because the school's leadership and climate was much more inclusive. The change was so dramatic that parents, who were not involved in the direct campaign, were now thanking Miranda and the other parents who were.

Años pasados, sí tenía esa frustración, pero ahora hay una directora nueva y ella se está esforzando mucho, y la escuela ha cambiado mucho. Entonces, ahora me siento contenta con lo que están haciendo. [Years ago, I did have that frustration, but now there is a new principal and she is working hard, and the school has changed a lot. So, now I feel happy with what they are doing.]

La directora ahora pues ha hecho muchos cambios. Es una persona muy amable. Entonces, hizo un cambio completo en la escuela con el personal. Ahora entramos y todos nos reciben con una sonrisa, con un saludo. Y nos involucra en decisiones

de la escuela. Y siempre nos informa, ya sea por mensajes o cartas de lo que pasa

ahí. [The principal now has made many changes. She is a very kind person. Then,

she made a complete change at school with the staff. Now we enter and everyone

receives us with a smile, with a greeting. And she involves us in school decisions.

And always informs us, either by texts or letters of what happens there.]

Pues los maestros ya están contentos y ya hay más comunicación, porque la

directora anterior no tenía mucha comunicación con los maestros. Ella no los

valoraba. Cuando tenían sus reuniones, solo ella hablaba y los maestros no

opinaban. Entonces, era como que no estaban cómodos los maestros. Y los niños,

pues el ambiente es totalmente diferente, porque lo hacen más divertido y los

niños van felices a la escuela. [Well the teachers are already happy and there is

more communication, because the previous principal did not have much

communication with the teachers. She did not value them. When they had their

meetings, only she spoke and the teachers did not give their opinions. Then, it was

like the teachers were not comfortable. And the children, because the atmosphere

is totally different, because they make it more fun and the children go happy to

school.]

La satisfacción más grande que tuvimos fue cuando logramos el cambio en

nuestra escuela y ver a los papás que estaban satisfechos del trabajo que se hizo y

a los maestros, ellos mismos nos agradecieron el cambio que se había hecho. Y

otra satisfacción es ver que maestros que se tuvieron que ir en ese entonces, han

vuelto a la escuela a visitarla y nos agradecen, porque dicen que ven realmente

que los cambios se están haciendo. [The greatest satisfaction we had was when we

made the change in our school and seeing the parents who were satisfied with the

work that was done and the teachers, they thanked us for the change that had been

made. And another satisfaction is to see that teachers who had to leave at that

time, have returned to the school to visit and thank us, because they say they

really see that the changes are being made.]

Seeing the successful results of their activism both inspired and empowered

Miranda and other parents to stay involved and be vigilant. They knew that in the end

they were responsible for the success of their children. They, not the formal educators,

were ultimately in control and could make demands for changes when needed.

Pues yo siento en otros padres de familia que ven un apoyo y hasta en los

maestros, porque si ellos ven que hay una dificultad en la escuela, ellos confían en

que nosotros como padres tenemos la voz para abogar por ellos, por los

estudiantes y saben que nosotros con Padres y Jóvenes podemos pedir cambios en

DPS. [Well, I feel in other parents who see support and even in the teachers,

because if they see that there is a difficulty in school, they trust that we as parents

have the voice to advocate for them, for the students and know that we with

Padres y Jóvenes can request changes in DPS.]

Beliefs on leadership. Miranda's leadership reflected her beliefs as a parent. She

chose to be involved because she believed there was no other way. To her, parents must

be involved in their children's education in order to raise successful children. Her rights

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as a parent were directly tied to her obligations to be involved and support her children as much as possible.

> Mis derechos son, como padre, ser valorado en la escuela de mis hijos. Porque nosotros somos la primera escuela para ellos. Entonces, somos el cimiento de la educación de nuestros hijos. Entonces, somos un equipo junto con el personal. [My rights are, as a parent, to be valued in my children's school. Because we are the first school for them. Then, we are the foundation of the education of our children. So, we are a team together with the staff.]

> Sí, creo que soy una líder educacional. Porque me involucro en las mejoras de la escuela. Hay muchos papás que solamente creen que llevar al niño a la escuela ya es todo. Y ni siquiera saben qué es lo que está pasando en la escuela. O sea, no se involucran en nada. Entonces, a mí me gusta siempre estar al pendiente de lo que está pasando en la escuela, pero también ofreciendo mi ayuda. [Yes, I think I am an educational leader. Because I get involved in school improvements. There are many parents who only believe that taking the child to school is everything. And they do not even know what is happening at school. That is, they do not get involved in anything. So, I always like to be aware of what is happening at school, but also offering my help.]

> Pues como siempre he estado involucrada en la escuela, los maestros saben que si mi hijo necesita ayuda, pueden hablar conmigo. Tenemos la confianza de platicar en qué puedo apoyar yo al niño. Entonces, ven a mis hijos, ya los distinguen porque saben que siempre estoy ahí. Entonces, los niños también se sienten con

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esa confianza de saber que están seguros en la escuela con su maestro y que ellos

lo ven, como que, yo soy amiga de su maestra. [As I have always been involved

in school, teachers know that if my child needs help, they can talk to me. We have

the confidence to talk about what I can support the child. Then, they see my

children, they distinguish them because they know that I am always there. Then,

the children also feel that confidence to know that they are safe at school with

their teacher and that they see it, like, that I am a friend of their teacher.]

El rol como padre, pienso que tiene que ser un requisito para todos los papás,

estar al pendiente, involucrados, apoyando, porque al final de cuentas son

nuestros hijos los que tienen llograr sus metas. Y somos las personas que tenemos

que tener claro que somos las que nos tenemos que esforzar para que ellos se les

dé lo que necesiten para lograr sus sueños. [The role as a parent, I think it has to

be a requirement for all parents, be aware, involved, supporting, because in the

end it is our children who have achieved their goals. And we are the people who

have to be clear that we are the ones who have to make an effort so that they are

given what they need to achieve their dreams.]

To Miranda, leadership was setting the example of how to be a good parent and a

good person through one's involvement. She meant to set this example not only for her

children, but for her community as well.

Para mí, el liderazgo es saber guiar y poner el ejemplo a las demás personas que

están detrás de ti, que te están siguiendo, porque siempre te van a ver como un

ejemplo. Y tomar iniciativa para hacer pues. Depende de en qué sea el liderazgo,

pero siempre tener el primer paso. El liderazgo educacional, pues para mí es saber proporcionar las herramientas y tener la guía para lograr el éxito de los estudiantes. [For me, the leadership is to guide and set the example to the other people behind you, who are following you, because they will always see you as an example. And take initiative to do it. It depends on what the leadership is, but always have the first step. The educational leadership, because for me it is knowing how to provide the tools and have the guidance to achieve the success of the students.]

It is her belief that parents should be at the forefront of educational justice because "debemos trabajar todos juntos" [we must all work together.] Everyone and anyone who is working to benefit her children and the community are required to step up and do their best. She would humbly accept any role in leadership that required her and knew that the success of her children depended on the success of both parents and educators. One could not be successful without the other.

Pues, yo creo que simplemente el hecho de ver que nuestros hijos están recibiendo una buena educación, para nosotros esa es la satisfacción. Creo que no es necesario que nos den un papel para que haya un reconocimiento, pero sí que valoren el esfuerzo que hace uno como papá. [Well, I believe that simply the fact that our children are receiving a good education, for us that is satisfaction. I think it is not necessary to give us a role to have an acknowledgment. But they do appreciate the effort that one makes as a father.]

Todos debemos ser un equipo. Todos tenemos un rol en la educación de los niños.

[We must all be a team. We all have a role in the education of children.]

Theme Five: The Front Lines of the Battle

Parents and students belong at the forefront of educational leadership for educational justice. Without a doubt the participants all believed they had an important leadership role to play in the fight for educational justice. It was their collective understanding that teachers, administrators, and even legislators could not win this fight alone. They knew they must all come together as one in order to make any progress toward breaking down the oppressive systems and finally creating equity in education. Both parents and students understood their voices were necessary to this role and that their experiences, in some situations, outweighed those with college degrees. Their voices meant something, and they believed they should have a say in decisions and policies affecting their children and themselves. To the students this was common sense, they could not understand why they could not have a significant voice in measures that affected their lives the most.

Lilianna. Lilianna was an 18-year-old high school senior. She had been a member of PJU since she was a freshman. A self-assured and determined leader, Lilianna discussed the reason for her leadership, her involvement in PJU, and her beliefs regarding students leading for educational justice.

For all of our interviews, I met Lilianna after school at the Sheridan Library. Having lived in Denver most of my life, I was surprised to find that just southwest of the city is a bustling independent municipality that contained an elementary school, middle

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school, high school, municipal center, recreation center, and library all on the same two-lane street. Lilianna had to only walk across the street to get to the library. Sheridan High School had 359 students with 86% being racially minoritized (mostly Latinx) and 90 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The Sheridan high school, middle school, and elementary school were all part of the Sheridan School District.

As I pulled up to the library, I was surprised to see it was so busy. Several middle and high school students were outside the small building talking with one another in small groups. As I made my way to the front desk, I noticed even more students inside quietly chatting with their friends and doing homework. Most of the stand-alone chairs and tables were filled with students. Asking the twenty-something gentleman at the front desk which study room I had reserved, I mentioned to him how wonderful it was to see so many youth at the library. He said because the library was right next to all of the schools, students either went there or to the recreation center located on the other end of the street. He said bluntly, "They usually come here though."

As I was about to turn away from him, Lilianna ran up behind me and got my attention by patting me on the shoulder. She recognized me because of my large, red purse and had also seen me at the PJU 2019 Strategic Planning Meeting a couple months before. With a huge smile she said, "Hi! I'm Lilianna!" We talked a bit before we went to find study room number one. I immediately found Lilianna to be extremely smart and full of passion. She laughed often as we talked, and I was inspired by her upbeat, positive energy. Making our way to the study room, we realized that two high school freshmen were already occupying the room. The table was filled with opened books and

worksheets. With regret, because it looked like they were completely involved in studying, I told them I had reserved the room. They immediately jumped up and began putting their belongings together. Lilianna smiled at them and teased them politely about working so hard. It seemed as if she knew them. They smiled and laughed, quickly leaving us the room.

Lillianna was a pretty young woman with exceptionally long, straight, brown hair that was parted down the middle. Her hair was so long that it rested on her forearms as she sat comfortably with her hands in her lap. She wore a thin, blue, zipped up sweatshirt and jeans. Her brown eyes lit up when she smiled, which was quite often.

Culture, immigration, and reason for leadership. Lilianna was born in California but raised in Colorado. She was the youngest of five children, one of whom recently passed away. Her parents were originally from Puebla, Mexico, and although they had been in the United States for 21 years, they were still made to maintain an undocumented status. One of her oldest siblings had DACA and the other had a temporary work permit. Her and her sister were the only ones born in America. Lilianna spoke both Spanish and English fluently and although she was American, she had grown up with many Mexican traditions.

> My culture, I would definitely describe it as traditional because I'm a first-
> generation student here in America. I still have a lot of ideals carried down from
> my parents and my grandparents. So, a lot of gender roles and what a female in a
> Mexican or Hispanic family should be doing. Stuff like that. But it's also very

close-knit. I would say anyone in the Hispanic community is. And loving. I feel like my culture's very loving as well.

Everyone is close. If one person doesn't know something, you can go to someone else, or they can give you their aunt's number, and they can help you. Everyone is always willing to help.

Lilianna's culture can be summed up with the following story.

One day, I was—I want to say I was a freshman in high school, so 2015. I wasn't driving. I was a freshman, I was 15 [laughter], and I ended up missing the bus that I take to go home. And so, I remember calling my mom and just telling her like, 'Hey, I don't have a ride home. I missed the bus. Should I walk home? What should I do?' And my mom, she explained to me that there wasn't a car home so she couldn't pick me up, and she ended up talking to our next-door neighbor, and my next-door neighbor ended up giving my mom a ride to the school and to pick me up.

Due to the Trump Administration's stance on immigration, Lilianna's parents were concerned about deportation and warned their children that it was a real possibility. Though her parents wanted to eventually move back to Mexico, they knew that without documentation or a path to citizenship, they would not be able to come back to see their children.

Yeah. Especially with the new presidency. It was definitely a talk we had to go through. And recently, we wanted to file for papers or some type of green card, or citizenship, or whatever we could. And we talked to a lawyer. And my mom's

been waiting twenty-one years for this. And they ended up saying, 'We don't think it's going to be possible. If it is, you guys are going to have to go back to Mexico for ten more years and then come back.' So, that's—we're aware of it now. But it's kind of always in the back of our head because they want to be able to come here and there. But if it's not possible, then we're not really sure what we're going to do.

Growing up, my parents always told me, 'We're planning on going back to Mexico. We came here for you guys to get your education to get a good job, and then we want to end our days in Mexico.' So, growing up, that was always what I heard, but losing my brother definitely changed things. He's buried here in the United States in Evergreen. But I feel that they know that if they end up going back to Mexico with no type of residency or anything like that, they're going to have to accept the fact that they're going to see him one last time, and they'll not be able to come back.

Lilianna's parents' undocumented status weighed heavily on her, but at the same time created purpose in her life. It was her ultimate goal to be there for her community.

My hopes and dreams for myself would mean getting a college education, and becoming a dentist, and being able to come back to communities like this, which are predominantly minorities and just being able to help them have nice smiles. I want to give back to my community because this is where I was raised. I've seen the hardships families have gone through. I've seen hardships siblings have gone through. I've experienced it all with them. And I want to be able to say, 'It's not

much. But here's what I can do,' and be able to help them. And then my hopes and dreams for my family would be figuring out what stability looks like in five or ten years from now.

Her family's experiences with immigration also gave Lilianna reason for her leadership. She knew that being American gave her a status where she could be secure in raising her voice. In doing so, she was determined to help both her family and her community.

I don't have an immigration status, but I would, yes. Growing up in a household where my siblings weren't getting accepted at schools because they couldn't get government money and couldn't get certain jobs because they didn't have those visas or DACA, it made me want to be someone that would speak out about it because I was very fortunate in being born here and seeing those struggles and knowing that I can do something about it. If I can then I should, and I will. I think immigration was a big thing for me. Because I used to be like, 'Dang. My family's going through this. Yeah.' And then I started seeing other people—how passionate they got when they would talk about it. When they talk about their family. And then I was like, 'I have that passion, too!'

As she became involved in PJU, Lilianna learned to raise her voice regarding many issues affecting her community. This included immigration. Beyond this, she also worked with immigrants her own age to help them navigate the system and find resources for school.

I'm a part of PJU, so I speak out when I see things that shouldn't be happening, especially towards immigrants, I will speak out. I will do whatever is necessary to do it. And even if it's just helping a student that doesn't know what scholarships to look at so that they can go to school. It's little things. It's big things. It's just anything.

School experience. Lilianna's school experiences varied depending on the school she attended. She was grateful for the Sheridan school community and appreciated the fact that almost everyone knew one another and supported each other.

I would describe my [school] community as a very close-knit group that grew up together. Everyone that is a part of the Sheridan School District definitely knows each other, knows someone of someone else's family. We were pretty much raised together since it's such a small community. And I would definitely say that we think of ourselves as a family. A big, old group of family, because everyone just knows each other. Everyone is always there to help each other.

Having attended Sheridan District schools for both elementary and high school, she noticed a difference academically when she went to a majority white middle school. This experience made her keenly aware of the inequity in education based on where schools were located. Finding the classes in her high school were below her level, Lilianna took classes at both Arapahoe Community College and the University of Colorado at Denver.

When I went up to middle school, I went to a bigger, predominantly white middle school. That's where I saw the shift in education. I felt that I could only keep up in

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that middle school I was at because I was a bigger reader in elementary, so I would read a lot. And I had older siblings, so a lot of the things I was learning I recognized. But I could see the difference. That the education at my middle school was a lot higher than the education my past peers were getting. When I moved back to come to this high school, I could once again see the shift. A lot of the classes—yeah, there would be honors, this and that, but a lot of the stuff I was now learning in high school I had already learned in middle school. So, I ended up taking college classes at Arapahoe Community College for English and stuff, ended up taking those classes as a freshman in high school and I ended up skipping a science course here at the high school so I could jump into a sophomore class. I could see that the education, it wasn't keeping up to, say, other school districts I have seen. I always recognize that.

Though high school had been generally easy for Lilianna, it had, at times, become a refuge for her by allowing her to navigate through the personal tragedy of losing her brother.

I think a big problem for me was when my brother passed away. He passed away the last two weeks of my junior year, so finals weeks. That was it. Losing anyone is hard but losing a family member is one of the hardest things. And I think that's the hardest thing I've ever had to go through. And to get through it, I just kept going. I kept plowing through the snow. I ended up taking the finals I needed to take, being there for my family when they needed me, and finishing the year off. And then as soon as the year ended, I'm a part of a program through CU Denver.

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And so I did five weeks with them, every day on campus at eight o'clock till five

o'clock sometimes. And I took more classes down there. And then after that, I had

about two weeks of summer, and then I had school again.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos and leadership. Joining PJU her freshman year, she

was one of the first students to be involved in the PJU Sheridan Youth Chapter. With the

2016 presidential election, she found that it was not just about her family anymore; it was

about her entire community. Though she always spoke up when she witnessed personal

injustice, PJU helped her broaden her voice to include her community.

I became a member my freshman year. I think that was right before the

presidency—before Trump was like, 'I'm running.' I want to say it was because of

that. You know, I think it was because at that point there was just...I became a

member and just talking about how I felt when Trump announced he was going to

run for the presidency. I think that was like the moment I was like, 'Okay. I'm all

part of this group. That's it.'

They've taught me to not silence myself. Because I used to be—I always speak up

when I needed to, but that's only if I had to. But now it's you could speak up

whenever you want. Whenever you see some type of injustice and if you see

anything, you can speak up and it is okay.

I'm not afraid to speak my voice and if I have to, I will. And if it means I'm

coming off as rude, I will apologize for that if you feel that way, but that doesn't

mean I'm not going to say what I feel.

When asked what made her the most passionate about PJU, she replied,

I'm most passionate about the fact that here's a group of people, we see something

wrong that's happening and we're going to say something about it. There's always

something to be done. We can help students. We can help students in the

education system.

At the end of each meeting, we have that chant. You can just feel the energy build

up, and I feel like when we talk about certain topics like immigration or public

schooling and where money should be going, it's like I feel that when I talk about

it there's such an intensity. People are definitely feeling this type of way.

Something needs to change.

Her leadership in the group was felt in large and small ways. For example, in the

Sheridan PJU Youth Chapter, she helped lead the meeting by reminding the group of

what was discussed in the previous meeting while bringing up new ideas and things the

group should be thinking about while executing their activism at the school. The most

significant activity the group had accomplished was creating a school survey and

surveying 170 of her peers at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. These survey

questions included, "I feel prepared for college/my after high school plans," and, "I know

where to find help if I'm having a hard time at home, in school, or just need someone to

talk to." The group planned to give the survey again this spring and compare the

responses. She was proud about how she approached her school's principal to acquire

permission to administer the survey.

Well, we were just like, 'Hey. We want to get out this survey. We need your

approval.' And then she ended up—you could tell she was uneased about it but

she's going to have to look it over. If it was a problem for her, I would have gone

to the board. I would have been like, 'Why can't we hand this out?' But she ended

up—she looked it over and then she was like, 'Okay. I'll get back to you guys

tomorrow,' and the next day she pulled us in, and she was like, 'All right. You

guys can do it.'

Lilianna also joined PJU and other students across the United States in Washington D. C.

where the group made demands of the Commission on School Safety. Lilianna gave a

speech at the rally, helping to create support for their cause.

To Lilianna, PJU was like a family. She enjoyed coming together as a group and

loved the group's synergy when they became passionate in the moment.

We also became a very close group. It just felt like when you would go over to

your aunt's house, they're having a *carne asada*. All your cousins are there and

stuff. It felt like I was walking into that. They were welcoming so I was never

afraid if I ever questioned my abilities, they were there to be like, 'Hey. People

question themselves. It's okay.' So, they were reassuring. They helped me

reassure myself.

I think my favorite memory would be the beginning of last year, that the bunch of

the old seniors that were—I was really good friends with. We went in for lunch

for a meeting. We went in for lunch, and it was just all of us. And we were just

talking about things we felt the school needed. So, we were just throwing things

out there. And it was like, 'I'm not the only one that thinks this?' And I think that

was one of the best feelings I've had.

Different people in Lilianna's life responded differently to her activism. Though her teachers were primarily supportive, she felt they may be threatened by her activism because they "might not have a job if some of these things go through." Her parents were happy she was involved but scared as to what her political involvement might mean. Lilianna, however, was the most critical of other students.

> Well, I think students my age are just like, 'Oh, all right. I'll be out of here before I know it.' But it's like, 'That's not the thing.' The point is that this is a system and it's not going to stop if you don't put a stop to it, and I think that's what frustrates me the most at least because you hear people complaining in the hallways, 'Oh, our principal sucks. Why did she take this away and that away?' And I'm just like, 'Dude. You can complain all you want but that doesn't mean that's going to change anything.'

Beliefs. Through her experiences, Lilianna came to believe that students play a major role in leading for educational justice. When asked what her definition of leadership was, she responded, "Leadership, to me, would be—that's bold. It would be speaking out when it needs to be done and it's not just for yourself. It's for other people who need it as well." This definition fit into her understanding of student rights. She believed it was imperative that students have the right to have a voice in the decision-making process of their schools. Because of this, she felt students had a role in educational leadership and should be at the forefront of educational justice.

> Speaking up and making decisions for the school. These decisions that are made for the school, they're for us so it would only make sense for a student body to be

able to put some input into the decisions. Choosing some of the education that's taught to us, some of the courses.

A student's role should be sharing experiences, anything they've seen. It's the voice. Like I said, it's the foundation. The school system is for the students, so it only makes sense for the students' voice to be one of the most important factors in any type of decision, any type of changes that are going to happen because if it's not fair to the students, probability is it's not fair to any of the adults.

Conclusion

While each of the participants had unique experiences, all of their experiences led them to assess their reality, question and interrogate systems and scripts, and hope for a better tomorrow. It was within these actions that each of them proved their leadership and made the case that parents and students should be at the forefront of creating educational justice alongside positional leaders. They believed that without them educational justice would not be possible.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Under-resourced parents and students of color interrogated racialized scripts concerning their leadership in multiple ways. The following chapter will review these scripts and how the parents and students, with the help of PJU, interrogated them. It will also discuss the new narratives that were created individually and collectively by these parents and students and what they mean for educational practice, policy, and future research.

The Vassilaros Critical Leadership Conceptual Model

As described in Chapter Three, the Vassilaros critical leadership conceptual model is designed to demonstrate that parents and students use community cultural wealth, CRT/LatCrit theory, and social justice praxis as operationalized through collective transformative agency to both interrogate the racialized institutional scripts and create new narratives that better fit their own beliefs and experiences. It is a constant dialogue that changes and becomes more sophisticated as parents and students become more fluent in their leadership skills and take on greater leadership roles. The findings in Chapter Four support the use of this conceptual model as the foundation of parents' and students' process of interrogation. Figure 5.1 illustrates this conceptual model.
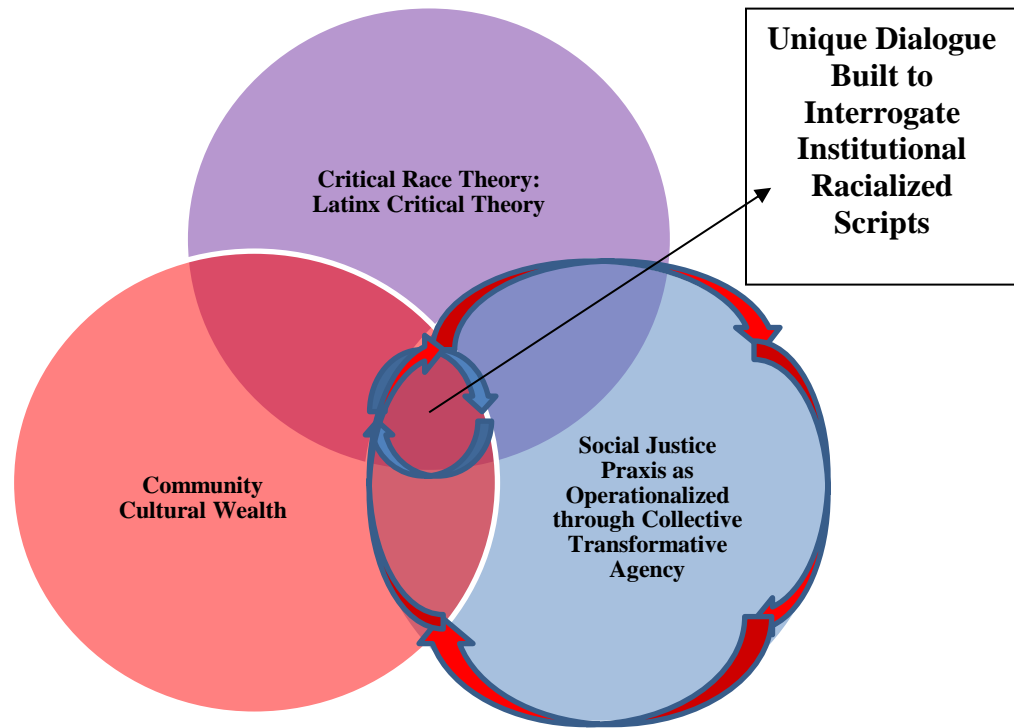
Figure 5.1. Vassilaros critical leadership conceptual model

Yosso's (2005) theory of community cultural wealth argues that under-resourced

students and parents of color have six different, but equally important, types of capital:

familial, linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational, and resistant. In their journey to

become leaders for educational justice, PJU parents and students demonstrated each of

these capital through their life experiences and activated them through their reflections on

their leadership. They also illustrated how they have taken advantage of Zipin's (2009)

dark funds of knowledge where students and parents found strength, purpose, and

courage from the light "within dark spaces" (Giraldo et al., 2018, p. 50) of their lives.

These forms of capital helped them interrogate and even counter several of the racialized

scripts.

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CRT/LatCrit formed a foundation from which parents and students explicitly drew their activism. This was evident in the intersectionality of the oppression of immigrant rights, suppression of language, and the racial and educational disparities students and parents lived throughout their school experiences. Parents and students were first-hand witnesses of this oppression and refused to excuse it or act as if it did not exist. Instead, through their constant reflection and involvement in PJU, students deconstructed and reconstructed what race and other intersecting oppressions meant for their present and for their future.

Each participant had a transformative journey that continued to transform with every new question and every decision to actively control her/his life through activism. Though PJU facilitated some of this leadership by helping parents and students develop skills such as public speaking and organizing, while also providing political education to help politicize members, PJU acted only as a lever. It was the parents and students who ultimately developed a liberatory culture among themselves. They chose their own questions and began to critically assess and reflect on their own reality. They did this both individually and collectively, choosing to join and remain active in a group that they believed enabled them to work together to dismantle oppressive systems and dominant racialized scripts. By doing this, they participated in both "serious reflection" (Freire, 1970, p. 65) and action which, according to Freire (1970), are two inherently dialectical components of social justice praxis, in that they work against the status quo to create a new dialogue. Through this process of social justice praxis as operationalized through

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collective transformative agency, parents and students began to not only interrogate racialized scripts, but to also create new narratives of their own.

Forming a New Conversation

To parents and students, leadership and their transformative journey became more than one skill set or political education. All of the participants transformed this knowledge from a desire to protect only themselves and their families to leadership that included and focused on their community. They each began to see themselves as part of the larger picture and began to interrogate racialized scripts collectively, which they found was a much more powerful strategy. The collective interrogation of racialized scripts was symbolized by Lilianna who said,

I became a member my freshman year. I think that was right before the presidency—before Trump was like, 'I'm running.' I want to say it was because of that. You know, I think it was because at that point there was just—I became a member and just talking about how I felt when Trump announced he was going to run for the presidency. I think that was like the moment I was like, 'Okay. I'm all part of this group. That's it.'

I'm most passionate about the fact that here's a group of people, we see something wrong that's happening and we're going to say something about it. There's always something to be done. We can help students. We can help students in the education system.

Yadira also described this transformation in her own thinking and in her leadership when she reflected on what her rationale was as a student before PJU, compared to what it is currently.

Before I joined Jóvenes Unidos, I, as a student, was just - school was something that was happening to me. It was just a thing. I went to school every day and I tried my best, but I didn't really think much about it. And I definitely did not think that I had any control over it whatsoever. And I just thought like many students think, which is, 'It's just the way things are. It's the way it's supposed to be. It's the way it's always been. And I would just have to get through these four years, and I'll make the best out of it. And let's have fun when we can have fun, and that's pretty much it.' Yeah. I think that's what my feeling was beforehand.

And then after, as I got more and more engaged and I learned more and more about just the significance of education and the great disparities that existed, it just really deepened in me a sense of empowerment and a sense of urgency, and a sense of justice, like this is just unfair. And that feeling, when you have a sense of unfairness, you feel like something is unfair or unjust, it can drive you. And then you start seeing things much more differently. Yeah. I mean, it's a transformation for sure. It takes a while, lifelong sometimes, for many people.

This transformation also caused many of the participants to question and challenge their own communities as well as the dominant culture. Both Miranda and Ximena were perplexed as to why many of the parents did not get involved with their children's schools. Miranda even felt that families should be required to be involved.

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Ximena explained that she was sad to see that many in her community, because of their immigrant status, did not choose to invest in their community in the United States. She said,

> Yo pienso que mi comunidad es muy trabajadora pero de veces nos enfocamos solo en trabajar y tener dinero y no nos preocupamos por estudiar, por conocer nuestro entorno social y político. Porque creo que la mayoría venimos con el objetivo de regresar a nuestro país. Y con las necesidades que pasamos en nuestro país, nos enfocamos más en tener dinero para llevarlo. Pero cuando nos damos cuenta de que ya nos quedamos aquí por años, muchos año, muchos de nosotros no tomamos las oportunidades de estudiar y de envolvernos, más que nada, en las escuelas de nuestros hijos; creo que es bien importante. [I think that my community is hardworking but sometimes we focus only on working and having money and we do not worry about studying, about knowing our social and political environment. Because I think most of us come with the goal of returning to our country. And with the needs that we have in our country, we focus more on having money to take it. But when we realize that we are already here for years, many years, many of us do not take the opportunities to study and wrap ourselves, more than anything, in the schools of our children; I think it's very important.]

In addition, Lilianna challenged other students who she felt did not care about the world around them.

> Well, I think students my age are just like, 'Oh, all right. I'll be out of here before I know it.' But it's like, 'That's not the thing.' The point is that this is a system and

it's not going to stop if you don't put a stop to it, and I think that's what frustrates me the most at least because you hear people complaining in the hallways, 'Oh, our principal sucks. Why did she take this away and that away?' And I'm just like, 'Dude. You can complain all you want but that doesn't mean that's going to change anything.'

After learning together and challenging their beliefs and the racialized scripts of the dominant culture, parents and students began to create a dialectical resistance (Freire, 1970) where each act of resistance caused them to ask more questions, reflect, and then once again resist using innovative strategies. PJU aided in this form of resistance by helping parents and students determine the root cause of their oppression and how to organize to fight against it together. This resistance began to illustrate their work as activists and developed, what Yadira called, "a collective dream," and "a collective hope." Through this, they recognized and accepted that their work would be a long-term process of growth and determination. In this, they created something new and learned to interrogate systems and scripts at new levels. Yadira defined this process by describing her passion for the collective dynamic:

> I am most passionate about the leadership development aspect of our work and the community that is built just very organically through our work. The really deep relationships that form, relationships of mutual support that form and just seeing the transformation that people undergo. And seeing those moments that we spend so much preparing for, we could spend months on end preparing for a moment that could last one hour. That moment when our members and our

leaders come face to face with a decision maker or a person in power. That is to me the moments that we live for which is when two very different types of power come together and face each other off. It sounds very dramatic. Sometimes it is, sometimes it's kind of boring [laughter]. But, yeah, just seeing the final outcome of all that prepping and meeting after meeting and all the research that we did and everything that it took to just get to one result of a campaign and then when that happens, that ends. Debriefing that with members you can really start to see their understanding of the organizing process and how excited they are to get to the next level and do the next thing. And then over time people, like going through those cycles over time, people begin to understand the longevity of this type of work. That it's a long-term struggle and that we may not even get there, and we may not even win in the time that there's still at school or their kids are at school. We might get there many, many years after that but they're still in it. They still care.

Together, parents and students created the dynamic belief that they must be at the forefront of educational justice. Not only were they certain that educators could not accomplish educational justice alone, but they believed educational leaders would never be able to do so without the leadership and active voices of parents and students as well. Lilianna said with conviction,

A student's role should be sharing experiences, anything they've seen. It's the voice. Like I said, it's the foundation. The school system is for the students, so it only makes sense for the student's voice to be one of the most important factors in

any type of decision, any type of changes that are going to happen because if it's

not fair to the students, probability is it's not fair to any of the adults.

Though educators and leaders of positional power have an expertise that often results

from a degree, parents' and students' expertise comes from within and is proved by their

experience. Their voices are necessary to the interrogation, destruction, and rebuilding of

educational systems. In creating these systems anew, they will design schools not only

for those in the dominant culture, but for all children, families, and communities.

New Narratives

Racially-minoritized parents and students have rich community cultural

capital that not only creates a foundation for a belief that education is paramount to

their success, but that it is also foundational to their activism and leadership. This

counters the script that racially-minoritized parents and students, due to deficiencies in

character, culture, and community, do not care about education.

According to Yosso (2005), "Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges

nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and

cultural intuition" (p. 79). For some, especially the parents who spoke about their family

and childhood in Mexico, leadership and activism was a tradition that ran strong in their

families. For example, Ximena's father was an activist in Mexico when she was a child.

When her family was to be removed from their home and the farm they worked, her

father went to the Mexican government and was able to file for protections for his family

and his community. Though she did not understand his activism at the time, she now

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credits her father for giving her the courage to also fight for her community. Ximena explained,

> Y eso me recuerda mucho a mi papá. Porque no lo entendí cuando fue al Mexico Districto Federal a buscar mejoras. No lo entendí hasta ahora que ya soy grande y hasta ahora que estoy más o menos desarrollado como organizador. En este punto, entiendo lo importante que era y ahora que estoy trabajando para ayudar a organizar, puedo entender su punto de vista y las cosas por las que luchaba. [And that reminds me a lot of my dad. Because I did not understand it when he went to the Federal Mexican District to look for improvements. I did not understand it until now that I am already big and until now that I am more or less developed as an organizer. I understand at this point how important it was and now that I am working in helping to organize, I can understand his point of view and the things that he used to fight for.]

Miriam also had a strong paternal presence in her life and looked to her father as an example of leadership. Though he did not fight for his community like Ximena's father, he taught his children strength by demonstrating a love for knowledge and education.

> Lo digo porque me siento que mi papa ha sido y sigue siendo un buen líder de familia y él no necesita de un título. Solo tuvo hasta el tercer grado de escuela primaria. Sí. Y nos pone el ejemplo porque él devora libros. Le encanta leer. Le encanta el conocimiento. Y lo refleja. Nada tiene que ver que sea un hombre humilde o de escasos o bajos recursos porque para mí es la persona más educada

del mundo. [I say it because I feel that my dad has been and continues to be a good family leader. And he does not need a title. He only had until the third grade of elementary school. Yes. And he sets the example because he devours books. He loves to read. He loves knowledge. And it reflects it. He has nothing to do with being a humble man or one with few or few resources because for me he is the most educated person in the world.]

The students also found their familial capital to be an asset as they discovered their bicultural identity. In reflecting on his parents, Alejandro found they educated him in more than just the customs of their culture but also taught him to be caring, supportive, hospitable, and forgiving. These were all qualities that led to his passion for leadership. Julia also found pride and strength in the customs of her family. Upon discovering the customs of her parent's culture, she was proud of her family and the fact that she carried on aspects of that culture as a first-generation American.

> When I was in elementary, we did this festival and in that festival it was my first time seeing the Mexican dancers and that was my favorite memory because that's when I was introduced. Because I was born here but my parents were still raising me with their traditions and customs. So that was my first time exposed, 'Oh, that's so cool. I come from that.' Just seeing them dance. Just in the music. Just being present there.

This made her activism in fighting for her culture important to her.

Linguistic capital, which is defined by Yosso (2005) as including "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language"

(p. 78), was an important strength possessed by all of the students. Because all of the students spoke both English and Spanish, they viewed their linguistic capital as a great asset not only in their development, but also to their leadership.

Throughout the interviews, students used Spanish terminology to refer to their experiences. For example, Lilianna referred to a barbeque as a "carne asada." When students were together, they flowed between Spanish and English seamlessly, many times using Spanglish, which is an informal combination of the two languages. Additionally, in group meetings, PJU practiced linguistic justice by not simply interpreting for the Spanish speakers, but by translating for all monolingual speakers using headphones while they conducted their meetings in both Spanish and English. Speaking Spanish was so important to Julia that she protested her school's rules that prohibited her and other students from speaking Spanish in school. She said,

> In middle school, I would always get in trouble for talking Spanish. I would get what they called refocuses, where you would have to stay an hour after school for doing a bad behavior. So, I would always be staying after school, for talking Spanish. Every time a teacher would hear me talk in Spanish, 'Oh, that's a refocus. Oh, that's another refocus.' It would get on my nerves. Why can't I speak Spanish? I grew up speaking Spanish. That's my first language. It would get me so frustrated, because most of the students there were Latino…We were controlled basically, and that really got to me…I didn't know why they did it. I was, 'Okay, that's the rules. I have to follow them.' But then, once I got into high school, we argued, 'No, we want to speak Spanish!'

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Using the two languages allowed students to express their bicultural identity and move easily through the English and Spanish speaking worlds, endowing them with the wisdom of both. The significance of this was demonstrated by the PJU Leadville Youth Chapter who worked to obtain a biliteracy endorsement for students who passed AP Spanish. This was also acknowledged by all of the students, who, when asked if being bilingual was a detriment or a strength, overwhelmingly replied that it was a strength and helped them tremendously in life. Alejandro replied,

> For me personally, of course learning two languages is an asset because it helps me reach a bigger audience and also help out people that don't speak one language over the other. Growing up it was a detriment from a kid's perspective because I would have to translate things for my parents, and I used to hate doing that, but now I'm grateful because who else would have been translating that for when we would go to the doctor or things like that. It's been an asset overall.

Being bilingual gave them a greater position in the world because they were able to understand and connect with both cultures. This was an asset, not a deficit.

"Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). For all of the participants, aspirational capital enabled each of them to see through their economic and immigration struggles and maintain education as a primary value. Whether they were parents who came to the United States to ensure their children had a better education than they had received, or they were students who knew what their parents had sacrificed to give them a good education, education was paramount in all of the critical portraits. This

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was especially the case with Yadira, whose mother was deported when she was 18. Though her mother could have taken her children to Mexico with her, she sacrificed being close to them and having a daily relationship with them for their education in the United States. She felt education was especially important for her daughters and feared that without an education they might repeat her experiences of being trapped in violent relationships. Because of this, Yadira came to value education as well and fight for both her family and her community to receive an education that provided students with "options" for their future.

Parents, no matter their economic status or the threat of deportation, all maintained the dream that their children would receive a good education and successful future in the United States. Though they faced real barriers in coming and staying in America, they were not afraid to fight to ensure this occurred not only for their own children, but for the children of their community as well.

Ximena's critical portrait is the story of a parent who, no matter her struggles, put her children and their education first. She was eloquent as she described both her challenges and her dreams for the future.

Tengo un poquito de miedo de ser deportada y dejar todos los sueños a medias. Pero intento no pensar en eso porque todos los días tengo que salir, tengo que trabajar y tengo que lidiar con ese tipo de situación, entonces trato de no hacerlo parte de mí. Y de hecho, yo a mis hijos desde que se fue su papá, yo les he dicho que yo también un día me puedo ir sin más. Pero siempre ellos saben y conocen la situación mía, pero yo le digo, 'Eso a mí no me detiene para seguir en lo que

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estoy.' Yo trato de siempre hacerle sentir que aunque yo no sea persona legal en

este país yo voy a pelear por ellos porque estén bien y por mejorar mi entorno, mi

entorno de aquí de la comunidad, que no me va a detener eso. Porque hasta ahora

no ha sido un obstáculo ni el idioma, ni la inmigración. [I have a little fear of

being deported and leaving all dreams half-hearted. But I try not to think about

that because every day I have to leave, I have to work and I have to deal with that

kind of situation, so I try not to make it part of me. And in fact, I have been with

my children since their father left, I have told them that I too can one day leave

without more. But they always know and know my situation, but I tell him, 'That

does not stop me from continuing in what I am.' I try to always make him feel

that even though I am not a legal person in this country, I am going to fight for

them because they are well and to improve my environment, my environment

here in the community, that will not stop me from doing that. Because until now,

it has not been an obstacle, neither the language nor the immigration.]

This statement demonstrates how steadfast Ximena and other parents were in their vision

for themselves and their children despite all obstacles.

For the students, especially those who were undocumented, aspirational capital

did not come easily. In fact, Yadira told a story of a PJU campaign where students with

an undocumented status were asked to write what they wanted to do in the future on

white t-shirts. Most could not complete the task because they could not see a future for

themselves. This was also the case for Yadira and Alejandro. They had reservations about

their futures because they were unsure of their future political status in the United States.

Each one used this uncertainty, however, as purpose to keep fighting for a future they knew they and their community deserved. This was evident in their activism with PJU and their mission to successfully graduate from college and become mentors to others in their same position.

A "good" parent of color is one who supports her children and ensures that they receive the best education possible, even if this puts her at odds with educators. A "good" student of color questions her education and its systems and structures. Using critical thinking skills to determine if she is getting an equitable education, a "good" student of color resists those educators, policies, and systems that she finds to be oppressive and causes her to receive an inequitable education. This counters the script that a "good" parent of color is one who "defers to educators and places unquestioned faith in their authority" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 349).

Resistant capital, which "refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2005, p. 81), is critically evident within each of the participants. In fact, resistant capital was the product of the transformative process that occurred once each member became involved with PJU. Parents and students began to recognize oppressive systems and then began to resist those systems by not only joining rallies and other overtly resistant events, but each participant, in their own way, began to critically think about their own reality. In doing this, the students then went from being quietly compliant to actively questioning their teachers and the educational systems of which they were a part. In doing this, they also grew in

self-esteem and self-agency which allowed each of them to form a rich identity that thrived in an environment of resistance. Alejandro reflected,

> Most importantly is how it changed me internally because after I became more involved, I became more confident. My self-esteem went up. I felt I didn't have to hide my identity anymore. I embraced my culture and my identity. Because prior to that, that was one of the biggest issues that I was faced with internally, having to hide my identity for such a long time. It pressed on my self-esteem and my self-worth. So, it was very critical that I was involved with Padres because it opened my eyes to a lot of things and helped me become a leader.

> Parents also learned to question and raise their voices even though it might have been a risk to both themselves and their families. Though she was uncomfortable speaking up at a DPS Board Meeting, Miranda courageously pressed through her testimony to not only take part in resistance, but to also demonstrate the power of this resistance to her children who drew a picture of their mother with the words "Sige peliando [sic]" [Keep fighting]. She did this without regard to her immigrant status in the United States or the fact that she spoke only Spanish. She showed her children that their education was worth fighting for, no matter the obstacles.

> This was also the case in Lara's portrait. When she felt her children were not receiving their education, she was protectively fierce in rushing to their aid. Though she had an undocumented status, this did not stop her from raising her voice and engaging in conflict with administrators. She did this to ensure her family's dreams would be fulfilled. She was acutely aware that educators did not always put her children's

educational success first, and as a "good" parent, she felt it was her duty to protect the education of her children.

Parents and students achieved what Sólorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) refer to as "transformational resistance" (p. 219). Through this, a parent or a student has "awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination" (p. 319) and is "motivated by a sense of social justice" (p. 319). Internally, parents and students appear "to conform to institutional or cultural norms and expectations, however, individuals are consciously engaged in a critique of oppression." (p. 324). Externally, parents and students are also engaged in overtly resistant activity such as participating in protests.

PJU supported parents and students in both internal and external resistance, and all of the parents and students who were interviewed participated in both. For example, the students were all successful in school but were acutely aware of the systematic oppression that occurred in their education. They questioned these systems within their schools by doing things like conducting surveys, while they also interrogated them outside of school by participating in marches, rallies, and giving speeches that demanded change. Julia explained,

> I don't know the method they use, but they're real about reality. They don't have nothing to hide. They're like, 'This is reality. We have the data here.' They taught me that—nowhere else I would have learned it if I didn't come here.
> Changed me, oh, like a new view in issues because if I'm presented something, like an issue, I would look at it, and I'd think, 'Oh, that's the issue. Okay.' If a

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teacher was teaching me something, I would accept what they were teaching me, but I would never question it. So yeah. Having a more open mind of always questioning stuff or—Why is it like that?

Before I was with Padres, I would always question but in my head. I would never speak up. But once I got to Padres, I question it. I speak up. I'm more willing to have conversations with people about issues.

I'm always questioning everything they do because why? Is it for your interest? The student's interest? Why?

Under-resourced parents and students of color regard their leadership in their own education and the education of their children as an obligation and required to change one's own circumstance and that of one's community. This is contrary to the script that leadership is too much of a burden on parents and students (Fine, 1993; Hartney, 2014; McGuinn & Kelly, 2012).

Maintaining a value or a dream for an education created a sense of obligation in all of the participants. They knew their dreams would not be handed to them and to achieve them they needed to both endure sacrifices and put in a great amount of effort. Though they felt they were entitled to certain rights as parents and students, they also believed they were obligated by their culture, their families, their community, and their experiences to be "good" parents and "good" students.

All of the parents interviewed reported an "obligation" to be the best parents possible for their children. This included becoming involved with their education and fighting for their rights when need be. Miranda expressed this obligation by joining

together with other parents and fighting for new leadership in her children's school. Lara

did this by teaching herself to read to her children. And Ximena did so by doing research

to ensure that her children were enrolled in the best school and then made certain she was

involved in the school to help wherever needed. This obligation was described by

Miriam, who explained,

> Para mí, es siempre tener altas expectativas. Decir, tú puedes. Si lo hizo alguien
>
> más, claro que tú lo puedes hacer. Y tenemos que encontrar todas las herramientas
>
> y lo necesario para llegar al máximo nivel de educación y desarrollo comunitario.
>
> [For me, it is always to have high expectations. Say, you can. If someone else did
>
> it, of course you can do it. And we have to find all the tools and what is necessary
>
> to reach the highest level of education and community development.]
>
> Debemos de ser líderes. Bueno, por según mi experiencia con los grupos de niños
>
> y con mis propios hijos. Pienso que si los padres no somos buenos líderes dentro
>
> de nuestras casas - dirigiendo y mostrando el camino correcto a nuestros hijos - va
>
> a ser difícil que. Solo los maestros en las escuelas, por decirlo así, no solo un líder
>
> en una organización pueda lograr todo lo que se puede lograr. [We must be
>
> leaders. Well, based on my experience with groups of children and with my own
>
> children I think that if parents are not good leaders in our homes—directing and
>
> showing the right way to our children—it will be difficult for them to. Only
>
> teachers in schools, so to speak, not only a leader in an organization, can achieve
>
> everything that can be achieved.]

All of these parents kept their obligations by becoming strong parental figures who were involved in their children's lives. This is counter to the idea that Latinx parents are "lazy" and do not care about their children's education. On the contrary, they cared deeply and became involved despite economic, linguistic, or immigration barriers. This sense of obligation interrogates the script that activism is a burden on parents and students. To them it was a responsibility, not a burden. It was a necessary commitment to ensure their dreams were fulfilled.

It is important for under-resourced parents and students of color to work alongside teachers, principals, superintendents, and others with positional power to have any real affect in creating educational justice. Parents, students, and educators must all be respected as transformative leaders who must be united in order to support and strengthen one another. This argues against the script that only principals, superintendents, and others with positional power can be educational leaders working toward educational justice (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018) and questions the notion that leadership for educational and social justice must be a lonely and stressful role for educators who attempt such change (Theoharis, 2007).

To the parents and students, solving racial and educational inequities did not have a single answer and therefore could not be prevented by one person. All educational leaders, including parents and students, must fight systemic racism both individually and together, creating a new system of educational justice. They believed that fighting for educational justice alone was foolish and that those who did so would succumb to the overwhelming pressure that fighting against the status quo would inevitably create. An

example of this lay in the core values of PJU. Defining community care, PJU wrote, "This work is demanding and cannot be done alone. We value the wellbeing of each person, and we support and encourage one another in centering ourselves. We care for ourselves and each other, because we need each of us in the long haul."

There was a reason parents and students came together and fought collectively. They knew that alone they would not have the power to create change. This is an important lesson for positional social justice leaders who feel that the weight of educational justice is squarely on their shoulders. The cost is far too expensive to afford any martyrs and the weight of this fight is too heavy for one person or even a small group of people to bear. With a larger and more diverse foundational support, strengths can be fortified and weaknesses can be mitigated to create a force for change. As Miranda said succinctly, "Todos debemos ser un equipo. Todos tenemos un rol en la educación de los niños. [We must all be a team. We all have a role in the education of children.]"

Racially-minoritized parents and students have expertise that is vital to creating educational justice. This expertise is unique to their experiential understanding as parents and students who are aware of their oppression and the systemic inequity that is presently inherent in education. This interrogates the script that to develop educational expertise an educational leader must hold a college degree (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Nygreen, 2016).

Parents and students interrogated this script as they recognized many racial and educational disparities and inequities in their schools and then chose to do something about it. Even those who had good experiences in school recognized them. For example,

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Miriam reported that she and her children had an overwhelmingly positive experience in

DPS. She found, however, that when she moved from one neighborhood to another, the

schools were not the same in the quality of education they offered.

Pero al cambiar de vecindario también vi que había diferencias, y no me explicaba

por qué. [But when I changed neighborhoods, I also saw that there were

differences, and I could not explain why.]

Cuando se trató de que el distrito apoyara escuela Fairmont, por el vecindario

donde se encuentra, creo que no tuvo ningún problema. Hubo todos los medios

todo lo que necesitaban para que la escuela tuviera un buen funcionamiento. Pero

cuando llego aquí al vecindario, y mucho más en lo que era la escuela Kepner, yo

veía que tenía la escuela necesidades y que yo nunca entendí porqué era tan difícil

que el DPS pudiera suplir esas necesidades. Aquí me encontré con edificios

viejos. O muy probable no es que no tuviera la preparación el personal - sino que

eran salones grandes con un gran número de alumnos. Detalles como esos. [When

it came to the district supporting Fairmont school, for the neighborhood where it

is located, I think it did not have any problems. There were all the means they

needed to make the school work well. But when I got here in the neighborhood,

and much more in what was the Kepner school, I saw that the school had needs

and that I never understood why it was so difficult that the DPS could not meet

those needs. Here I found old buildings. Or very likely not that the staff did not

have the preparation—but that they were large classrooms with a large number of

students. Details like those.]

Lilianna noticed this as well when she went from one school district to another. The difference in the quality of her education was extremely noticeable.

When I went up to middle school, I went to a bigger, predominantly white middle school. That's where I saw the shift in education. I felt that I could only keep up in that middle school I was at because I was a bigger reader in elementary, so I would read a lot. And I had older siblings, so a lot of the things I was learning I recognized. But I could see the difference. That the education at my middle school was a lot higher than the education my past peers were getting. When I moved back to come to this high school, I could once again see the shift. A lot of the classes—yeah, there would be honors, this and that, but a lot of the stuff I was now learning in high school I had already learned in middle school. So, I ended up taking college classes at Arapahoe Community College for English and stuff, end up taking those classes as a freshman in high school and I ended up skipping a science course here at the high school so I could jump into a sophomore class. I could see that the education, it wasn't keeping up to, say, other school districts I have seen. I always recognize that.

Several of the parents also referenced a Health Justice campaign they worked on with PJU. After hearing complaints from students about the food services at the schools, they decided to research the issue themselves and sample food services from several demographically distinct neighborhoods in DPS and other more predominately white districts. They found the food in their neighborhoods was of much lesser quality and not cooked as well as the food served in the other neighborhoods. They believed that this

disparity in food service was symbolic of other educational inequities. The parents and students brought this to the attention of the DPS superintendent and would not leave his meeting without him hearing their concerns.

Though most of the participants referenced good school experiences and caring teachers, Yadira believed these experiences were not enough to change the systemic oppression endured by students daily.

> I definitely did have caring teachers, but I think that that wasn't enough. I think it's one thing to look at a young person or group of young people and be able to identify their dreams and their hopes and their goals and empathize with their experiences and be kind of like emotionally supportive, but I think that educators especially, have to go much more well beyond that, like your emotional support is never going to be enough because we all live in a systemic system and we're all going through an education system that from the very beginning, from its foundation, it was not designed for all people in the US to succeed. And so, you have to do so much more and have be much more active to break some of those cycles and to undo some of those systemic racism and systemic oppression. So, I think that's what sometimes people don't understand that you can have great teachers that are very caring and loving and they have great relationships with their students and their students' parents—I come across a lot of those stories of parents especially, like they love some of their kids' teachers. They love the personality, they love how they treat their kids, they love—sometimes they're even the same ethnicity and that's enough for some parents and some people, but

then I start asking them, okay, what about the work? What kind of work? What are they teaching your kids? What are they learning? What kind of homework are they bringing home? And you start going deeper and then you sort of realize the disservice because if you really, really truly genuinely cared and valued all students in the same way. You would challenge them all in the same way. You would support them all in the same way and some even more. I think that's the difference between equality and equity.

No one understands the problem and the solution more than those who live with it daily and are most significantly affected by it. Parents and students did not learn about these inequities though textbooks or lectures. They learned about them through their own experiences within these systems. In many ways, their experiential knowledge is more relevant than a college degree alone.

Immigrant Rights

A primary finding of this study, and one that is supported by CRT/LatCrit, is the invisibility of educational justice and immigration rights. This study has made it clear that immigration is an educational leadership issue. Without attention to these rights and the systems creating trauma and fear in immigrant families and communities, students will face challenges from which many may not be able to recover. This creates seemingly permanent obstacles for many parents and students and will affect their ability to receive an equitable education. The relationship of immigration rights to educational justice was present in every portrait. For example, Alejandro was afraid to get involved in his school before he had DACA. This is evidence that students who have an undocumented status

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may never live up to their full potential given the threat of deportation. Alejandro also noted, however, that if it had not been for the support of his teacher who helped him navigate financial aid, he would have never gone to college. Educators can be invaluable allies to immigrant students when they choose to reach out and work to understand what their students are struggling with.

For the participants in this study, activism became a way to challenge inequities surrounding immigration rights. By finding their courage, parents and students refused to allow current political policies or xenophobic sentiment to silence or intimidate them. More than anyone else, they know the stakes if anti-immigrant policies continue to persist. They refuse to let these policies deter their dreams of education and will fight with everything they have to ensure their rights are honored and their families and communities are safe and able to obtain a successful future. This was summed up by Pablo, who said with passion,

> People are willing to take to the streets now. I mean you can even see it in, for example, the undocumented families. Back then, and I can speak for myself too, back then they used to tell us, 'Don't say you're undocumented. Never talk to anybody about your status. Just don't go to protests, you might get deported.' And now it's like I'm undocumented, and I'm here, and I've gone to the Capitol, and I went to Washington D.C. at the first State of the Union. I was there sitting in front of Trump, you know what I mean? And I'm undocumented. And people are willing to do that now, versus 20 years ago, it would only be select people to be able to do that.

Because they're understanding the ways and the structures that are meant for us to be scared. They're understanding, for example, students didn't even know they had rights, right? Back then, police could come in and do whatever they want with you and we were just like, well, they were pleased but now students through education and through that, they were like, 'No. You know what? You're not going to do this.' The people are willing to stick up for themselves because of the education that organizations and groups and community groups are doing now because they're understanding, one, what's at stake, and two, they're saying that the structure is meant for us to be this way and we're tired of it. We're just tired of it. We've seen generations and generations having to put up through that and I think this is the generation where we understand it enough for it to not keep going.

Julia demonstrated this courage when she stood up to her school's administration to demand that her and other students be allowed to speak Spanish in school.

In middle school, I would always get in trouble for talking Spanish. I would get what they called refocuses, where you would have to stay an hour after school for doing a bad behavior. So, I would always be staying after school, for talking Spanish. Every time a teacher would hear me talk in Spanish, 'Oh, that's a refocus. Oh, that's another refocus.' It would get on my nerves. Why can't I speak Spanish? I grew up speaking Spanish. That's my first language. It would get me so frustrated, because most of the students there were Latino…We were

controlled basically, and that really got to me…I didn't know why they did it. I

was, 'Okay, that's the rules. I have to follow them.' But then, once I got into high

school, we argued, 'No, we want to speak Spanish!'

Lara also recognized that her sons' rights were being taken advantage of because

she did not speak English. When the school would not provide her with a Spanish version

of the behavior contract that the school's administration demanded she sign, she said

firmly,

'De todos modos no lo voy a firmar.' Y el policía me miró fijamente y yo dije,

'¡No. Incluso si lo llevas a asustarme e intimidarme, no lo voy a firmar!' y no lo

firmé. ['Anyway, I'm not going to sign it.' And the policeman stared at me and I

said, 'No. Even if you take him to scare and intimidate me, I'm not going to sign

it!' and I did not sign it.]

She did this at great risk to herself as an immigrant with an undocumented status.

Implications and Recommendations

Practice. Though immigration is currently a hot-button political topic due to the

xenophobic and racial rhetoric and policies currently at work in the United States (Varela,

2018), school leaders cannot stand on the sidelines and watch as students and families are

irreparably harmed. School leaders must begin to understand immigration rights as both

an educational leadership issue and a moral imperative that is critical to creating

educational justice. Students and families should be protected as much as possible from

these politics, and leaders must provide an educational space that is as safe as possible

and helps families and students navigate their very complicated present and future. In doing so, they will become activists in their own right.

According to Freire (1970), those who are oppressed must learn to understand their own oppression and take up the mantle of leadership. The oppressor cannot lead the oppressed to conquer their oppression. This study suggests that positional school leaders should not only move forward by valuing all voices within leadership, but that they should also support families and students to be true leaders and decision makers in their own emancipation. Quite simply, families and students deserve a real voice at the table that not only invites their thoughts as opinions but recognizes their views as best practice and truly significant to the issue at hand. This is antithetical to a symbolic voice which is often heard but rarely listened to. In many cases, administrators like to invite parents and students into the process as consultants, but then ignore them when they express opinions that do not align with their ideas (Malen, 1999; McGinn Luet, 2017, Warren & Mapp, 2011). This was evident in the DPS Superintendent Meetings, where parents were invited, but needed to engage in overt resistance in order for the superintendent to listen to them. However, even then, parents questioned his motives and did not feel they were really listened to or that anything truly changed. According to Lara this was common:

> Como le digo, que ellos siempre dejan todo en papel. Todas las promesas que hacen siempre quedan en papel. Nunca, realmente - allá. [As I say, they always leave everything on paper. All the promises they make are always on paper. Never, really...there.]

Power evaluation. School leaders should realize the political nature inherent in their positions and purposely survey families and students to determine how they perceive the positional power in both the school building and within the school district. This will help highlight those with little positional power, such as under-resourced families and students of color. It will also aid positional school leaders in both understanding how their power is perceived and how they can mitigate such perceptions. To do this, they should learn to develop practices that give parents and students more equity in terms of perceived and real power. This includes helping them realize their own community cultural wealth.

Transformative leadership pipeline. Each of these critical portraits demonstrated that under-resourced parents and students, with appropriate support and education, have a great capacity to lead. School leaders should strategically work to support these families and students in their journey to become educational leaders and hold their decisions with high authority. In doing so, school leaders must learn to balance their own authority with the authority of those who are most affected by their work.

To do this, school leaders should work with community organizations who authentically and successfully work to attain educational justice for racially-minoritized families and students. Through this partnership, positional school leaders and communities should work to develop an educational tract that politicizes families and students and helps them develop leadership and organizing skills by creating a *transformative leadership pipeline* for under-resourced parents and students of color.

This pipeline should be created deliberately in order to ensure that parents and students have a consistent voice from year to year and that they have an authentic opportunity to transform into leaders who are capable of not only understanding the issue and its context within a systematic scope, but are also able to make decisions. This pipeline should have yearly cohorts of parents and students who can work together collectively and can rely on each other for belonging and support. This should be in addition to ensuring that every student has an education that is steeped in critical thinking, leadership skills, and the history and culture of racially-minoritized populations.

Educators must create a process of social justice praxis where families and students learn to understand their oppression, take action with other educational leaders to dismantle oppressive systems, and then participate in a deep reflection of their actions (Freire, 1970). This pipeline will help to ensure that parents and students can become independent thinkers, represent their communities authentically, and continue to resist structural inequities. It is crucial that during this process schools do not replicate power structures, but support parents and students to develop new practices that interrogate the existing systems and scripts. Due to this, authentic partnerships with community organizations focused on educational justice is paramount.

Though all of the students interviewed were academically strong students, it is important that students of all abilities are represented and engaged in the pipeline. This includes students with disabilities, ELL students, and students who are at risk of dropping out of school. According to Sólorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), dropping out of school is "self-defeating resistance" (p. 317). This resistance is "not transformational and

in fact helps to re-create the oppressive conditions from which it originated" (p. 317). Supporting these students by engaging them in political education, critical thinking, activism, and self-reflection may aid them in developing self-esteem, belonging, and agency that will help them re-engage and become more successful in school.

In addition, families who are the most marginalized should be recruited into the pipeline. This includes undocumented immigrant families and homeless families. Language and transportation services should be provided to these families so they can authentically and consistently participate.

Full members of the leadership team. Instead of being consultants, families and students need to be on the leadership team and active in all decision making. This means that racially-minoritized families and students should be present at every level of leadership including, but not limited to, principal and teacher preparation, human resources, budgeting, policy development, and curriculum development. Though there may be confidentiality issues in some of these areas, families and students should be involved in all areas that do not require such considerations. In this way, positional leaders and parent and student leaders will have true collective transformative agency, where all systems are transparent, and all leaders work together to interrogate racial and dominant scripts while forming new knowledge and new solutions to root causes of educational oppression. Without this paradigmatic shift (Kuhn, 1962) positional leaders will continue to work in a cycle in which oppressive systems flourish and persist.

Educational leadership preparation. Positional school leaders should be purposely trained to create and take part in these liberatory processes. This includes a

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critical education that both politicizes leaders and helps them understand and support the leadership of families and students. They must learn to work as allies and create systems that prioritize and honor family and student voices. This training should be part of superintendent, principal, and teacher preparation programs and should utilize a curriculum that is steeped in the knowledge of CRT/LatCrit theory, community cultural wealth, social justice praxis as operationalized through collective transformative agency, racially-minoritized culture and history, and organizing. Each are important to the foundational knowledge of positional school leaders and will help these leaders understand how critical it is to develop authentic partnerships with families, students, and communities.

Educational policy. As recommended in practice, policy makers should begin to view parents and students as valuable voices toward developing and implementing policy. The result of this policy recommendation should be changes that are made to district policy and other district level democratic processes. This includes having family and student voting representatives on school boards and on district committees. To do this, students older than 16 should be allowed to vote in school board elections and parent and student representatives must be elected as opposed to being appointed members.

To ensure that families and students have the leadership skills to make district level decisions, the school district should support their leadership through programs such as the transformative leadership pipeline that was discussed in the previous section, but functions at the district level. School districts should also work with community groups to ensure that parent and student volunteers for this pipeline are diverse so that they

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represent all neighborhoods including families and students who are racially minoritized and under resourced. A district fund should be set up for all parent and student candidates, and an election policy should be enacted that only allows candidates to support their campaigns with such funds. It is important to ensure that family and student board members are authentic representatives of their community.

Research. Research should begin to value racially-minoritized and under-resourced parents and students as actors in their own education. Further research that looks at parents and students as educational leaders and evaluates processes that may help them become active decision makers at the school and district levels is needed. This includes continuing to dialogue with educational justice organizations to evaluate what their role in this process should be, and how these community groups can work successfully with schools and school districts to promote parent and student leadership. Scholarship should also include questions as to how parents and students can become part of school districts' democratic processes. This research should focus particularly on traditionally marginalized families and students, including those with undocumented immigration status, those who are homeless, students who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out, and those with disabilities. This includes developing policy that allows parents and students to be voting members on school boards. Research should also examine what form of education and support is needed for parents and students to be successful in these roles. Exploration should also include questions that inquire about the multiple ways parents and students are active in their own education and how positional leaders can better support such activities.

This study successfully utilized the YPAR methodology to make this a social justice project where PJU members became co-researchers. This methodology proved to be an empowering and reflective process for all of those involved. It is this study's recommendation that research involving families and students as participants should also utilize this methodology to not only "research" families and students, but to also respect, engage, educate, and empower families and students as well. Researchers must learn to let families and students take the lead in their own emancipation.

Conclusion

Using the assets and experiences garnered through a process of organizing as described in the Vassilaros critical leadership conceptual framework, under-resourced and racially-minoritized parents and students can skillfully interrogate racialized scripts that undermine their leadership and create new narratives. By doing this, parents and students should finally be seen by practitioners, legislators, and researchers as important actors in their own education. This study describes both the beliefs and the actions parents and students have taken to prove to both themselves and to positional school leaders that they have a critically important role to play in the collective fight for educational justice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Key Terms

Agency. A person's ability to control their own life. Auerbach (2007) notes that agency is "people's capacity for making a difference in the conditions of their lives" (p. 255).

Aspirational capital. This "refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

Astroturf campaigns. A term used to refer to the inauthenticity of a group of neoliberal reformers who use families as a cover for political purposes. According to Hartney (2014), it is "a pejorative label intended to convey that an advocacy group lacks any significant grassroots support for its position and is instead a special interest group funded by wealthy elites" (p. 4).

Brave space. Instead of the term "safe space" (Arao & Clemens, 2013, p. 140), Arao and Clemens (2013) use brave space to refer to a space where the oppressed can bravely "name their oppression" (p. 140). This acknowledges the fact that for people who are oppressed, there is no real safe space. "History and experience has demonstrated clearly to them that to name their oppression is likely to result in their dismissal and condemnation as hypersensitive or unduly aggressive" (p. 140).

Chicano/a/x. A term of identity that is used by Mexican-Americans to signify their political consciousness. Though this term has become familiarized and used as a synonym for Mexican American, it was first adopted as a political statement in the Chicano Movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's (Munoz, 1989; Rocky Mountain

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PBS, 2014). The term Chicanx is used in this research as a gender-neutral term to include those who identify as male, female, "trans, queer, agender, non-binary, gender non-conforming or gender fluid" (Ramirez & Blay, 2016, para. 4). Though this term is not yet found in the literature, it is in lockstep with changing the terms Latino/a to Latinx (Ramirez & Blay, 2016). Chicano, Chicana, and Chicanx are used purposefully throughout this research, specifically when describing the Chicano movement.

Chicano movement. A social movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's demanding equality, equity and social justice for Chicanos in the United States. This movement was inspired by the 1965 United Farm Workers (UFW) strike led by Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta. Though the movement was inspired by the UFW, it was, however, an entirely separate event. Whereas the UFW strike was a multi-racial and multi-ethnic labor movement, the Chicano movement identified itself through "nationalist and neo-separatist" (Munoz, 1989, p. 17) ideology. This ideology manifested in the La Raza Unida Party, a separatist Chicano political party, and in a demand for Aztlan, a Chicano homeland in the southwestern United States (Munoz, 1989, 2007). Although radical in its ideology, it has become known as a time when Chicanx fought for their civil rights as American citizens, while celebrating their unique Chicanx heritage, culture, and identity (Rocky Mountain PBS, 2014).

Civic capacity. This is required for developing and maintaining positive school reforms (Stone et al., 2001; Warren, 2011). According to Stone (2001), civic capacity

>concerns the extent to which different sectors of the community—business,
>
>parents, educators, state and local officeholders, nonprofits, and others—act in

concert around a matter of community wide import. It involved mobilization—

that is, bringing different sectors together but also developing a shared plan of

action. (p. 596)

Collective action. Collective action is "what brings people to the point where

they join together to solve problems in their communities, places of work, and the larger

society" (Williams, 2005, p. 129). It "consists of coordinated behavior among two or

more people that, at least in some minimal way, satisfies individual goals and satisfies a

jointly experienced outcome" (King, 2008, p. 22).

Collective efficacy. According to Smock (2004), collective efficacy is a "sense of

collective identity—in the process of developing relationships with others, residents

come to recognize their connection to a 'community' beyond their household.

This…makes collective action possible by enabling residents to perceive their shared

fate" (p. 67).

Collective transformative agency. A quality of Engeström's (1987) expansive

learning theory, transformative agency occurs when either individuals or groups

(collective) break "away from the given frame of action and [take] the initiative to

transform it" (Sannino et al., 2016, p. 603).

Community. Community can be defined in different ways. This study uses the

definition described by Warren and Mapp (2011) who write, "By community, then, we

mean a group of interconnected people who share a common history, a set of values, and

a sense of belonging—in short, a culture and identity" (p. 20).

Community activism. Also referred to as community organizing, community activism is

> the internalization of activities, begun by one person or a relatively small group of people, to bring community residents together, in a shared structural fashion, thus taking joint action to improve the local quality of life, generally in a lasting manner, both for the people who organize and for the larger community. (Berkowitz, 2000, p. 333)

Community cultural capital. A theory developed by Yosso (2005) to explain "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Yosso (2005) defines capital as something that is possessed by a community, as well as by an individual. In this framework she recognizes that several "forms of capital are nurtured" including "aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant" capital, which overlap and develop each other into a richer and denser capital than any one of them could be apart (p. 77).

Conformist resistance. According to Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001), these resistors are motivated by social justice but are not critical of the systems of oppression. They are likely to blame themselves or their culture. These resistors "strive toward social justice within the existing social systems and social conventions" (p. 318). An example of this is a student who wants to help dropouts, so she works with the school to offer after school tutoring (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

Critical consciousness. Critical consciousness "can be described as an awareness of how institutional, historical, and systemic forces limit and promote opportunities for particular groups that lead to collective action to change unjust social conditions" (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 40). Developing this form of consciousness makes a person critical of a society and their lived experiences within that society. This is a product of politicization. Ginwright (2007) argues that "when people critically reflect on the conditions that create their suffering, they can collectively mobilize to change such conditions" (p. 413).

Critical case study portraiture (CCSP). This is a novel methodological process that combines elements of case study, critical race methodology, youth participatory action research (YPAR), and phenomenological critical evocative portraiture. It is both a method of inquiry and a product of research.

Critical race theory (CRT). With its roots in law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), CRT has been developed in educational literature as a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact

> educational structures, practices and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower….CRT in education refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color. (Yosso, 2005, p. 74)

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Critical social capital. A theory developed by Ginwright (2007), critical social

capital

> departs from traditional notions of social capital by placing a greater focus on the
>
> collective dimensions of community change, and it centers on how racial identity
>
> and political awareness serve as an important community and social resource for
>
> youth. (p. 404)

Critical social capital is facilitated by intergenerational advocacy that challenges negative

concepts" (p. 404) about youth of color. "It is developed by cultivating an understanding

of personal challenges as political issues" (p. 404).

Cultural capital. Martinez-Cosio (2010) writes that cultural capital "is in essence

a power resource; distinctive cultural knowledge transmitted by families of each social

class" (p. 285). This theory is seminal to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977).

Culture. According to Auerbach (2007) culture is "a system of values and beliefs

[that] mediates between individuals and their place in the social order by giving them

various schemas for meaning making" (p. 255). Additionally, Yosso and Garcia (2007)

define culture as "behaviors and values that are learned, shared, and exhibited by a group

of people. Culture is also evidenced in material and nonmaterial productions of people.

As a set of characteristics, culture is neither fixed nor static" (p. 153).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This "exercise of

prosecutorial discretion" (American Immigration Council, 2019) was created on June 15,

2012 and expired March 6, 2018. DACA provides "temporary relief from deportation and

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work authorization to certain young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children" (American Immigration Council, 2019). The Trump Administration ended DACA on September 5, 2017. Though no new applicants are being accepted, those who already have a DACA status may reapply and renew their status for another two years.

Deficit thinking. Deficit rationals "root educational disparities in deficiencies in the skills, knowledge, culture, support, values, or engagement of students, families, or communities rather than in systems of inequalities" (Ishimaru, 2014a, p. 189). Deficit thinking may be good intentioned, "it may show up as altruism under the guise of helping, or as pity embedded in a performance of compassion" (Nygreen, 2016, p. 207). Instilled in this method of thinking are the reasons educators give when they lower the academic standard for many of their students of color or write off under-resourced parents when they fail to show up for a parent-teacher conference. By believing that their student or their student's family is incapable of learning or even caring about the education process keeps them from doing just that. Deficit thinking, in its subtle way, keeps students from realizing their potential, and educators secure in the knowledge that "these poor kids" will always need them (Arriaza, 2004; Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Delgado-Gaitan, 2012; Dyrness, 2009; Fennimore, 2017; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2018; Jasis & Marriott, 2010; McAlister et al., 2012; McGinn-Luet, 2017; Moreno & Valencia, 2011; Nygreen, 2016; Paredes Scribner & Fernández, 2017; Valencia, 2011; Warren, 2005; Welton & Freelon, 2018; Yosso, 2005; Yosso & Garcia, 2007).

Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. This is a United States federal legislative proposal that creates a three-step process for "current, former, and future high school graduates and GED recipients" (American Immigration Council, 2019) who have an undocumented immigration status to become citizens. This legislation was first introduced in 2001 and has been reintroduced several times. Its latest version was introduced in 2017 but has yet to become law.

Direct action groups. A philosophy developed by Saul Alinsky (1971), direct action groups, or otherwise known as direct organizing, is democratic organizing that seeks policy change and uses research and education to negotiate demands with authority. "Direct involvement of members of the community in the activism and in the development of political relationships" (Christensen & Levinson, 2003, Activist Communities: Different Styles, Para. 4) is the focus of direct action groups. "Indigenous leadership is important in the philosophy of direct action groups, who aim to develop the political power of community members and to make them aware of this power" (Christensen & Levinson, 2003, Activist Communities: Different Styles, Para. 4).

Educational leadership. This form of leadership is fluid in its definition and scope (Bush, 2011). According to Merriam-Webster, to lead is "to guide on a way especially by going in advance" (Merriam-webster.com). Northouse (2010) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 2). Bush (2011) expands this definition to include leadership as accomplished by a group as well as by an individual. Bolman and Deal (2008) view leaders as those who are able to influence and change organizations. They address

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leadership in terms of framing and reframing the work of institutions and define four frames: structural frame, human resource frame, political frame, and symbolic frame.

Educational justice. Social justice in education (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017).

Education organizing. A term used to describe the political organization of families, students, and other community members around the issue of education and education reform (Lopez, 2003).

El Movimiento. A term used by Chicanx activists to describe the Chicano movement. (Beyond Chicanismo: The Colorado Chicano/a Student Oral History Project, 1999).

Empowering organization. An empowering organization "provides members with opportunities to develop skills and feelings of control in settings where people with similar interests share information and experiences and develop a sense of identity with others" (Russell et al., 2009, p. 893). It "includes processes and structures that enhance members' skills and provide them with the mutual support necessary to effect community level change" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 582).

Familial capital. This "refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).

Family engagement. The engagement of family in schools and the educational process. This term has evolved from parent involvement and signifies the idea that parents are defined more broadly than that of the traditional parental units of mother and father. It is an active rather than a passive term that also represents a shift in the

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understanding that educators need to do more than simply involve families in parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school nights, but that they need to actively reach out to families, understand the assets they bring in the education of their children, and truly engage them in the educational lives of their children (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; DeMatthews et al., 2016; Epstein, 2010).

Framing theory. According to Goffman (as cited Snow et al., 1986), framing is a "'schemata of interpretation' that allow individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' occurrences within their life space and the world at large…By rendering events and occurrences as meaningful, frames function to organize, experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (p. 464) This is a theory supporting collective action.

Funds of knowledge. A theory originally developed by Moll et al. (1992), funds of knowledge are "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133) in the lives of their students and their families. Several scholars have used funds of knowledge as a way to understand racially-minoritized students' successes and difficulties inside school and in their transition to college (Daddow, 2016; Marquez Kiyama, 2010; Rios-Aguilar, 2010; Rios-Aguilar & Marquez Kiyama, 2018).

Grassroots organizing. Wittig (1996) defines grassroots organizing as

a form of collective advocacy on behalf of a shared cause or direct action in the service of achieving a collective goal. It is locally organized and primarily single-issue based. Groups are local residents who organize themselves [and] seek to

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influence more powerful others...The primary goal is often to promote change in power relations. (p. 4)

Identity. Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003) define identity as "a set of logically connected propositions that a person uses to describe himself/herself and to others. Often, individual identities are socially constructed and embedded" (p. 208). Hunt and Benford (1993) identify four non-linear moments of identity construction as "becoming aware, active, committed, and weary" (p. 492). They write about a connection between individual and collective identity that involves "fostering sprit de corps, defining in-group/outgroup relationships, providing occasions for informal interaction, organizing formal ceremonies or rituals, maintaining morale, and articulating a shared ideology" (p. 490).

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Part of the United States Department of Homeland Security, this agency is tasked with enforcing the United States' policies and laws regarding immigration. This includes deportation of persons who have an undocumented status in the United States.

Influence. Influence "represents an ability to affect outcomes" (Bush, 2011, p. 109).

Institutional scripts. According to Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017), these "are a blueprint for identities and actions for different roles within an educational organization" (p. 346). They "explain how the unspoken dominant norms, roles, and expectations in schools shape individual behavior and interactions" (p. 344).

Intergenerational. When youth and adults work together toward a common goal Camino (2000).

La Raza. Translated, it means "the people." It is a term used to refer to the Latinx community.

Latinx. Used to describe Americans whose heritage originated in South America, Latin America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Spain and Mexico. "Latinx is a gender-neutral alternative to Latino, Latina and even Latin@...In addition to men and women from all racial backgrounds, Latinx also makes room for people who are trans, queer, agender, non-binary, gender non-conforming or gender fluid" (Ramirez & Blay, 2016, para. 4).

Leadership for social justice. This form of educational leadership "interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness" (Dantley & Tillman, 2006, p. 19).

Linguistic capital. This refers to "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78).

Navigational capital. This "refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

Neoliberalism. Nygreen (2016), defines this as "an ideological system as well as a set of political-economic policies that apply market-based principals to all subjects of public life" (p. 204). "In the neoliberal perspective, educational inequality is implicitly

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framed as an aberration in an otherwise fair and open society" (p. 210) In addition,

Goddard and Myers (2011) argue that neoliberalism

> touts a shrinking governmental role in social affairs, as well as strict
>
> adherence to free market principles, as a course that simultaneously instills
>
> responsibility in the citizenry and eliminates wasteful governmental expenditures.
>
> Under this schema, responsibility for maintaining order falls heavily on
>
> individuals and local communities. (p. 653)

Other. Kumashiro (2000) uses other to "refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, i.e. that are other than the norm" (p. 18).

Organizing tactics. Hartney (2014) writes organizing tactics "describe the individual activities in which groups engage" in their attempt to influence authority (p. 2) These can include but are not limited to: protest rallies, walkouts, sit ins, meetings with legislators, filing law suits, boycotts, and media campaigns.

Parent. In this research a parent is defined as an adult who is responsible or has been responsible for the well-being of a student. Though family engagement literature replaces parent with family to recognize both the varied forms of modern families and the idea of whole home support (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; DeMatthews et al., 2016; Epstein, 2010), this research is using parent, not to narrow the definition of family, but to be able to refer to a specific adult (no matter who that adult is) who parents in many forms and is specifically responsible for the well-being of a student.

Parent/student activist organization. In this study, this term is used to describe a grassroots organization, created and run by parents and youth using a Youth/Adult Partnership Model (YAP). This organization is designed for education organizing.

Positional power. This is "power in any organization accruing to individuals who hold an official position in the institution" (Bush, 2011, p. 109). Examples of positional power can be found in the titles of superintendent, principal, and teacher.

Positive youth development theory (PYD). According to Kirshner (2015), this theory "aims to reframe the enterprise of adolescence as the cultivation of strengths and purpose rather than the avoidance of risk or delinquency" (p. 13). Lerner (as cited in Preus, Payne, Wick & Glomski, 2016) describes PYD as a theory that views a young person as "a thriving individual as one 'who-within the context of his or her individual set of physical and psychological characteristics and abilities-takes actions that serve his or her own well-being and, at the same time, the well-being of parents, peers, community and society.'" (p. 68). Preus et al. (2016) view PYD as a theory that "represents a shift in thinking from a deficit model…to a positive strength-based model" (p. 68)

Power. Pfeffer (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008), define power as "'the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would not otherwise do'" (p. 196). Bolman and Deal (2008) note, "Power relationships are multidirectional" (p. 197). Blase (1991) argues that power "can be constraining or liberating…[and] is the property of social relationships, either among actors or between actors and a product of social interaction" (p. 74).

Psychological empowerment theory (PE). Zimmerman (1995) explains, PE "refers to empowerment at the individual level of analysis. The construct integrates perceptions of control, a proactive approach to life, and a critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment" (p. 581). Christens (2012) writes, PE "can therefore be thought of as the increasing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and relational capacities that individuals can acquire as they participate in empowering community settings and, in particular, efforts to change social and political systems" (p. 543).

Relational power. This is "power to" (Warren, 2005, p. 138). As Warren (2005) explains, "unilateral power is zero-sum, typically with winners and losers. By contrast relational power should reflect a win-win situation" (p. 138).

Resilient resistance. This resistance occurs when resistors leave oppressive "structures intact but work from the inside to succeed or prove others wrong" (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 320).

Resistant capital. This "refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

Resource mobilization theory. Collective action is the result of developing and deploying resources and networks (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996).

Restorative Justice. A behavioral strategy that brings together victims, offenders, and community members to mutually decide how the offender can restore or repair the harm that was caused (Restorative Justice, 2019). This is also referred to as restorative practices. This strategy is used to avoid involving the police and other behavior

consequences that may cause a student to be pushed out of school and enter the school-to-prison pipeline.

School-to-prison pipeline. The ACLU describes the school-to-prison pipeline as "a disturbing trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools into the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (ACLU, 2019). This process is started when students are pushed out of their schools through suspension, expulsion, and or police involvement. Racially-minoritized students and students with disabilities are the majority of the students who are affected by this.

Self-defeating resistance. This is defined by a person that has some critique of an oppressive system and/or society but is not motivated by social justice. According to Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal (2001), "These students engage in behavior that is not transformational and in fact helps to re-create the oppressive conditions from which it originated" (p. 317). An example of this is a student dropping out of school.

Self-efficacy. This is belief in one's self and/or abilities to achieve an intended outcome (Bandura, 1982).

Social capital. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 21).

Social Justice. The fair, equitable, and just distribution of wealth and privileges to all members of society. Social justice is particularly concerned with ensuring equitable conditions and rights to members of society who are traditionally marginalized. This

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includes providing equity in all educational systems and structures for the fair and just

educational attainment of all students (Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Social justice praxis. Based on the philosophy of Freire (1970, 1998) and themes

associated with leading for social justice throughout the literature, Furman (2012)

theorizes that

> Praxis involves the continual, dynamic interaction among knowledge acquisition,
> deep reflection, and action at two levels—the intrapersonal and the
> extrapersonal—with the purpose of transformation and liberation. At the
> intrapersonal level, praxis involves self-knowledge, critical self-reflection, and
> acting to transform oneself as a leader for social justice. At the extrapersonal
> level, praxis involves knowing and understanding systemic social justice issues,
> reflecting on these issues, and taking action to address them. (p. 203)

Student. In this research a student is defined as a young person who is currently

attending an elementary, middle, or secondary school. This definition includes adults who

became a member of the parent/student activist organization while still in school and

youth who dropped out of school in the past five years.

Transformative leadership. This form of educational leadership approaches

education from a critical perspective. Dantley and Tillman (2006) argue:

> It focuses on the use as well as the abuse of power in institutional
> settings…deconstructs the work of school administration in order to unearth how
> leadership practices generate and perpetuate inequities and the marginalization of
> members of the learning community who are outside the dominant culture…sees

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schools as sites that not only engage in academic pursuits, but also as locations that help to create activists to bring about the democratic reconstruction of society. (p. 23)

Shields (2013) writes that this form of leadership "focuses specific public goals and broad purposes of education in addition to its processes; it focuses on preparing students to be both individually successful as well as thoughtful, successful, caring, and engaged citizens of the global community" (p. 21) Shields' definition of transformative leadership includes eight tenets:

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change;

- the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice;

- a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice;

- the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;

- an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;

- an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness;

- the necessity of balancing critique with promise;

- the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 21)

Transformational resistance. Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) argue this resistance occurs when a person has "awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice" (p. 319). These resistors use an "arsenal of subtle strategies" (p.

319) to resist oppressive systems and/ or society. Transformational resistance occurs in two forms: internal resistance and external resistance. Internal resistance occurs when a person "appears to conform to institutional or cultural norms and expectations, however, individuals are consciously engaged in a critique of oppression" (p. 324). Those internally resisting also have a social justice agenda. External resistance "involves more overt types of behavior" (p. 325) such as active protests.

Trigger event. "A critical juncture which helps commit and mobilize a group of individuals, propelling them to transform concerns into dispositions and dispositions into collective action" (Jasis, 2013, p. 117).

Unilateral power. This is "power over" (Warren, 2005, p. 138). According to Warren (2005), "Unilateral power is zero-sum, typically with winners and losers" (p.138).

Youth/Adult Partnership Model (YAP). YAP is an intergenerational model of organization that brings adults and youth together in power balanced working relationship. In her study of YAPs, Camino (2000) observed that in the relationship it was the adult's goal "to work with, rather than for, youth" (p. 14). YAP "calls for a balance of power between youth and adults in program planning and decision making" (Einspruch & Wunrow, 2002, p. 2).

Appendix B: Consent Form

University of Denver
Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: Interrogating Racialized Scripts: Parents and Students Organized for Educational Justice Leadership

Researcher(s): Stefanie Gurulé, M.Ed. and Kristina Hesbol, Ph.D., University of Denver

Study Site: Padres y Jovenes Unidos

Purpose
You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to document the thoughts and experiences of organized parents and students on the topic of educational leadership.

Procedures
If you are a:
- Padres y Jovenes Unidos Parent or Student Member participating in individual interviews you will be asked to participate in three 60-90 minute interviews to develop your individual written portrait that will portray your experiences regarding leadership. You must participate in all three interviews.

- Padres y Jovenes Unidos Staff Member participating in individual interviews you will be asked to participate in one 60-90 minute interview to develop an organizational portrait that will portray your experiences regarding the leadership and structure of the organization.

- Padres y Jovenes Unidos Member/Staff participating in the Design Team where you will help design the individual interview protocols and help to analyze data and findings, you will be asked to participate in one to two 3 hour workshops. You may choose to participate in one, two, or all of these groups.

- Padres y Jovenes Unidos Member/Staff participating in presenting findings, you will be asked to participate in a 90 minute presentation to Padres y Jovenes Unidos and/or a 30 minute presentation to Mrs. Gurulé's Dissertation Committee. You may choose to participate in one or both presentations.

Voluntary Participation
Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to participate in group activities or continue individual interviews for any reason without penalty or other benefits to which you are entitled. The researcher may choose to withdraw you from the study for any reason at any time without your permission.

Risks or Discomforts
Potential risks and/or discomforts of participation may include the releasing of partially identifiable information due your portrait's rich description of your thoughts and experiences. Though this information may be partially identifiable, only the researcher will know the true identity of any participant and their corresponding portraits. This will make your answers to the questions, reflections, and your final portrait as confidential as possible. Pseudonyms will be used to identify all identifiable data obtained and portraits developed.

Benefits
Depending on how you choose to participate, possible benefits of participation include personal reflection about your ability to be an educational leader and training in qualitative research development and analysis. This will aid you in becoming an even better leader and/or researcher for educational justice. This research will also strengthen the position of organized parents and students to claim the role of leader in schools, districts, and educational policy.

Incentives to participate
You will not be receiving any compensation for participating in this research project.

Confidentiality
For those who choose to participate in the individual interviews your completed portrait may contain partially identifiable information due to its rich description of your thoughts and experiences. This may also be the case because there will only be six to ten member participants and four to ten staff participants in this study. This study will also be using the real name Padres y Jovenes Unidos in its publication. Though this information may be partially identifiable, only the researcher will know the true identity of any participant and their portrait, making your answers to the questions, reflections, and your final portrait as confidential as possible.

Only the researcher will have access to the actual identities of the participants. If a transcriber or translator is needed they will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to ensure your confidentiality. Your real identity will be held in the strictest confidence. After the first individual interview, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym. This pseudonym will be used to identify all information gained from the you during the research process, presentations, and in any future publications. The interviews will be transcribed (by a certified translator and/or transcriber when needed) within 48 hours. Within the 48 hours the tape recorder will be kept in a locked safe. Once the interview is transcribed the audio recordings will be deleted from their original devices and stored on the University of Denver's One Drive (this is more secure because it is secured by the University of Denver). If a professional transcriber is used the audio recordings will be transferred to that person using the University of Denver's transfer program software. Any passwords needed will be communicated over the phone instead of emailed. The audio recordings may be transferred to the researcher's paid Dropbox account once they are properly encrypted using encryption software. Any identifiable data will be deleted from the transcriptions. The audio recording will only be kept in One Drive and encrypted Dropbox. These will be destroyed or deleted after the completion of the study. Every form of data will be labeled under the pseudonym. This Consent Form will be kept for three years in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published about this study.

If you choose to participate in the Design Team or presentation of the findings your identity will be known to those in the room but will not be published. Your identity will never be correlated with a portrait.

However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Some things we cannot keep private and must report to proper authorities. If you disclose information about child abuse or neglect or that you are going to harm yourself of others, we have to report that to social services or law enforcement as required by law. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants.

Any information regarding your citizenship status **will NOT** be reported to any authorities.

Questions

If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions now or contact Stefanie Gurulé at 720-556-0544 or Stefanie.Gurul@du.edu or Kristina Hesbol, Ph.D. at 303-871-8479 or Kristina.Hesbol@du.edu at any time. If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

Options for Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below:
___The researcher may audio record and photograph me during this study.
___The researcher may audio record me but NOT photograph me during this study.
(Unfortunately, if the researcher is unable to audio record you, you will not be able to participate in this study. Due to the significant amount of data to be recorded, an audio recorder at minimum must be used in this research. If you have questions about this, please ask Mrs. Gurulé.)

Options for Role Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below (you may participate in multiple roles):
___I am a Padres y Jovenes Unidos parent or student member and would like to participate in the individual interviews.
___I am a Padres y Jovenes Unidos staff member and would like to participate in the individual interview.
___I am a Padres y Jovenes Unidos member or staff and would like to participate in the Design Team workshops where I will help to develop the individual interview protocols, analyze the data, and review findings.
___I am a Padres y Jovenes Unidos member or staff and would like to participate in the presentation of the finding of this research.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. Participants under 18 must have a legal guardian also sign unless the minor is legally emancipated.

_____   **_____**
Participant Signature   **Date**

_____
Participant Printed Name

_____   _____
Legal Guardian Signature   **Date**
(*Required for Participants who are under 18 and not legally emancipated*)

_____
Legal Guardian Printed Name

Universidad de Denver
Formulario de consentimiento para la participación en investigación

Título del estudio de investigación: Interrogar con guiones racializados: padres y alumnos organizados para el liderazgo en la justicia educativa

Investigador (es): Stefanie Gurulé, M.Ed. y Kristina Hesbol, Ph.D., Universidad de Denver

Sitio de estudio: Padres y Jóvenes Unidos

<u>**Propósito**</u>
Se te pide que participes en un estudio de investigación. El propósito de esta investigación es documentar los pensamientos y experiencias de padres y estudiantes organizados sobre el tema del liderazgo educativo.

<u>**Procedimientos**</u>
Si eres un

- Padres y jóvenes padres o estudiantes que participan en entrevistas individuales, se le pedirá que participe en tres entrevistas de 60 a 90 minutos para desarrollar su retrato individual escrito que retratará sus experiencias con respecto al liderazgo. Debes participar en las tres entrevistas.
- Miembro del personal de Padres y Jovenes Unidos que participa en entrevistas individuales, se le pedirá que participe en una entrevista de 60 a 90 minutos para desarrollar un retrato de la organización que describa sus experiencias con respecto al liderazgo y la estructura de la organización.
- Miembro y personal de Padres y Jovenes Unidos que participan en el Equipo de Diseño, donde usted ayudará a diseñar los protocolos de entrevistas individuales y ayudará a analizar los datos y los hallazgos, se le pedirá que participe en uno a dos talleres de 3 horas. Puede eleguntaria de Padres y Jovenes Unidos que participan en la presentación de los hallazgos, se le pedirá que participe en una presentación de 90 minutos para Padres y Jovenes y una presentación de 30 minutos en el Comité de Disertación de la Sra. Gurulé. Puedes elegir participar en una o ambas presentaciones.

<u>**Participacion voluntaria**</u>
La participación en este estudio de investigación es completamente voluntaria. Incluso si decide participar ahora, puede cambiar de opinión y detenerse en cualquier momento. Puede optar por no participar en actividades grupales o continuar las entrevistas individuales por cualquier motivo sin penalización u otros beneficios a los que tiene derecho. El investigador puede optar por retirarlo del estudio por cualquier motivo y en cualquier momento sin su permiso.

<u>**Riesgos o Molestias**</u>
Los riesgos potenciales y/o las molestias de la participación pueden incluir la liberación de información parcialmente identificable debido a la rica Descripción de su retrato de sus pensamientos y experiencias. Aunque esta información puede ser parcialmente identificable, sólo el investigador sabrá la verdadera identidad de cualquier participante y sus retratos correspondientes. Esto hará que sus respuestas a las preguntas, reflexiones, y su retrato final sea lo más confidencial posible. Se usarán seudónimos para identificar todos los datos identificables obtenidos y los retratos desarrollados.

Ventajas

Dependiendo de cómo elija participar, los posibles beneficios de la participación incluyen una reflexión personal sobre su capacidad para ser un líder educativo y capacitación en desarrollo y análisis de investigación cualitativa. Esto lo ayudará a convertirse en un líder y / o investigador aún mejor para la justicia educativa. Esta investigación también fortalecerá la posición de los padres y estudiantes organizados para reclamar el papel de líder en las escuelas, los distritos y la política educativa.

Incentivos para participar

No recibirá ninguna compensación por participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Confidencialidad

Para aquellos que elijan participar en las entrevistas individuales, su retrato completo puede contener información parcialmente identificable debido a su rica descripción de sus pensamientos y experiencias. Este también puede ser el caso porque solo habrá entre seis y diez miembros participantes y entre cuatro y diez miembros del personal en este estudio. Este estudio también utilizará el nombre real Padres y Jovenes Unidos en su publicación. Aunque esta información puede ser parcialmente identificable, solo el investigador conocerá la verdadera identidad de cualquier participante y su retrato, haciendo que sus respuestas a las preguntas, reflexiones y su retrato final sean lo más confidenciales posible.

Solo el investigador tendrá acceso a las identidades reales de los participantes. Si se necesita un transcriptor o un traductor, se les solicitará que firmen un acuerdo de confidencialidad para garantizar su confidencialidad. Tu verdadera identidad se mantendrá en la más estricta confidencialidad. Después de la primera entrevista individual, se le pedirá que proporcione un seudónimo. Este seudónimo se utilizará para identificar toda la información obtenida de usted durante el proceso de investigación, las presentaciones y cualquier publicación futura. Las entrevistas serán transcritas (por un traductor certificado y / o transcriptor cuando sea necesario) dentro de las 48 horas. Dentro de las 48 horas, la grabadora se mantendrá en una caja fuerte cerrada cerrada. Una vez que se transcribe la entrevista, las grabaciones de audio se eliminarán de sus dispositivos originales y se almacenarán en One Drive de la Universidad de Denver (esto es más seguro porque está asegurado por la Universidad de Denver). Si se utiliza un transcriptor profesional, las grabaciones de audio se transferirán a esa persona utilizando el software del programa de transferencia de la Universidad de Denver. Cualquier contraseña necesaria se comunicará por teléfono en lugar de enviarse por correo electrónico. Las grabaciones de audio pueden transferirse a la cuenta de Dropbox pagada por el investigador una vez que estén correctamente encriptadas utilizando el software de encriptación. Cualquier dato identificable será eliminado de las transcripciones. La grabación de audio solo se guardará en One Drive y en Dropbox cifrado. Estos serán destruidos o eliminados después de la finalización del estudio. Cada forma de datos será etiquetada bajo el seudónimo. Este formulario de consentimiento se conservará durante tres años en un archivador cerrado con llave en la casa del investigador. Su identidad individual se mantendrá privada cuando se presente o publique información sobre este estudio.

Si elige participar en el Equipo de diseño o la presentación de los hallazgos, su identidad será conocida por aquellos en la sala, pero no se publicará. Tu identidad nunca será correlacionada con un retrato.

Sin embargo, si la información contenida en este estudio debe ser objeto de una orden judicial o una citación legal, la Universidad de Denver no podrá evitar el cumplimiento de la orden o

citación. Algunas cosas no podemos mantenerlas en privado y debemos informar a las autoridades correspondientes. Si divulga información sobre abuso o negligencia infantil o si se va a perjudicar a sí mismo de otros, tenemos que informar a los servicios sociales o al cumplimiento de la ley como lo exige la ley. La información de la investigación se puede compartir con agencias federales o comités locales que son responsables de proteger a los participantes de la investigación.

Cualquier información con respecto a su estado de ciudadanía **NO será** reportada a ninguna autoridad.

Preguntas Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proyecto o su participación, no dude en hacer preguntas ahora o comuníquese con Stefanie Gurulé al 720-556-0544 o Stefanie.Gurul@du.edu o Kristina Hesbol, Ph.D. al 303-871-8479 o Kristina.Hesbol@du.edu en cualquier momento. Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre su participación en la investigación o sus derechos como participante, puede comunicarse con el Programa de Protección de Investigación Humana de DU enviando un correo electrónico a IRBAdmin@du.edu o llamando al (303) 871-2121 para hablar con alguien que no sea el investigador.

 Opciones de participación

Por favor, inicie su elección para las siguientes opciones:

___El investigador puede grabarme en audio y fotografiarme durante este estudio.

___El investigador puede grabarme en audio pero NO fotografiarme durante este estudio. (Desafortunadamente, si el investigador no puede grabarte en audio, no podrás participar en este estudio. Debido a la gran cantidad de datos que se registrarán, se debe utilizar un grabador de audio como mínimo en esta investigación. Si tienes preguntas sobre esto, por favor pregunte a la Sra. Gurulé.

Opciones para la participación de roles

Por favor, inicie su elección para las siguientes opciones (puede participar en varios roles):

___ Soy un padre o miembro de Padres y Jovenes Unidos y me gustaría participar en las entrevistas individuales.

___ Soy miembro del personal de Padres y Jovenes Unidos y me gustaría participar en la entrevista individual.

___ Soy miembro o personal de Padres y Jovenes Unidos y me gustaría participar en los talleres del Equipo de Diseño donde ayudaré a desarrollar los protocolos de entrevistas individuales, analizar los datos y revisar los hallazgos.

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___ Soy miembro o personal de Padres y Jovenes Unidos y me gustaría participar en la presentación del hallazgo de esta investigación.

Tómese todo el tiempo que necesite para leer este documento y decida si desea participar en este estudio de investigación.

Si acepta participar en este estudio de investigación, firme a continuación. Se le entregará una copia de este formulario para sus registros. Los participantes menores de 18 años deben tener un tutor legal que también firme a menos que el menor esté legalmente emancipado.

_____ _____   Fecha_____
Firma del participante

_____
Nombre impreso del participante

 _____
Firma del tutor legal   Fecha_____
(Requerido para participantes menores de 18 años y no legalmente emancipados)

_____
Nombre impreso del tutor legal

Appendix C: Design Team Workshop Agendas and Worksheets

Design Team Workshop #1 Protocol (3 hours)

(A Spanish language translator will be provided. The Spanish language translator will mimic this protocol, including writing the group's responses on presentation paper. The translator will stay after the group for a half an hour to breakdown her impressions of the answers. She will include anything that may have been lost in translation.)

Get to the group 1 hour early to explain and have co-researchers fill out Consent Forms and Study Questionnaires (This will also occur in the 2 weeks leading up to the Design Team Workshop #1 through home visits and meetings at PJU office).

- Individuals who would like to be co-researchers will be explained and sign the Consent Form (youth under 18 will need a legal guardian to sign the Consent Form). All forms and explanations will be available in Spanish and English.

Be sure all of those in attendance have signed the Consent Form.

Start the Design Team Workshop:

Introduce myself and my translator. Light snacks are provided. Participants can take a break and get a snack at any time and we will also be taking two 5-minute breaks. Provide bathroom information.

- Review the consent form. All activities are optional, and you may opt out at any time.

Explain the Design Team

- They are co-researchers, allowing them to inform the research interview protocols, review the data, code the data, and determine common themes and findings.
- Within individual interviews, the participants will individually help to develop the written portrait of themselves through interview, reflection, and dialogue.
- The group will not, however, know the true identities of the final portraits. Only the researcher will know this.
- Participants will be asked to help with presenting the final research to PJU in the end.

Explain that this Design Team Workshop is to introduce them to the research and develop a protocol that will be used during the Semi-structured Individual Interview.

Introduce research problem, research question, theoretical framework, and methodology (Give Handout) and review on large presentation paper.

- Check for understanding, answer question, and re-explain if necessary

5 MINUTE BREAK- Light snacks and beverages will be provided. (After 45 minutes.

How do you define leadership? (The group will give answers and the researchers/translator will record them on presentation paper.)

How do you define educational leadership? (The group will give answers and the researchers/translator will record them on presentation paper.)

On a piece of paper (handout worksheet and pens) reflect on PJU's leadership. Would you consider PJU leadership educational leadership? Why or why not? (Collect worksheet-do not discuss as a group.)

Review criteria for good research question and what to avoid (i.e. leading questions, open ended).

Circling back to the theoretical framework:

- Review research question and theoretical framework
- On a piece of paper (handout worksheet and pen) describe the different parts of this framework in your own words. (After 5 minutes have each person share and discuss their thoughts with another participant.) After paired discussion ask the group to define the parts of the theoretical framework. Record their answers on presentation paper (one sheet of presentation paper for each piece of the framework). Clear up any misunderstandings.
- If you were to interview yourself or another member what questions would you ask that may be represented in this model? What questions would help you learn about their ideas, experiences, and feelings of community cultural capital, critical race theory, social justice/collective transformative agency? What questions would you ask that would help you understand that person's leadership in PJU, the community, and schools? The researcher will give an example (i.e. What has been your work with PJU? Would you consider this work as leadership? Why or why not? What family values have led to your work with PJU?)
- Participants will work in pairs or small groups depending on how many are there for 10-15 minutes (The researcher will roam around to each group to answer questions)
- Pairs or groups will present ideas for questions to the larger group on presentation paper
- The larger group will be asked to discuss the questions and add or subtract questions where needed. The researcher will include new or subtracted questions on presentation paper.

5 MINUTE BREAK- Light snacks and beverages will be provided. (After 1 hour)

Circling back to the research problem: review the research questions and institutional scripts

- If you were to interview yourself or another member what questions would you ask that may address these institutionalized scripts? What questions would bring about stories related to these assumptions? What questions would you ask that would help you understand that person's leadership in PJU, the community, and schools?
- Participants will work in pairs or small groups depending on how many are there for 10-15 minutes (The researcher will roam around to each group to answer questions)
- Pairs or groups will present ideas for questions to the larger group on presentation paper
- The larger group will be asked to discuss the questions and add or subtract questions where needed. The researcher will include new or subtract questions on presentation paper.

What has not been thought of that will help in answering the research question?
- Researcher will write other ideas and questions on presentation paper.

Answer any other questions

END of WORKSHOP (The researcher will use information in correlation with questions the researcher has to create the Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol.)

Interrogating Racialized Scripts

Problem of Research: Educators, including leaders for social justice, hold attitudes and beliefs about under-resourced parents and students of color that exclude them from leadership in their own education. This exclusion is based on institutional racialized scripts that "are a blueprint for identities and actions for different roles within an educational organization" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 346). The institutional scripts are:

1) Only principals, superintendents, and others with positional power can be educational leaders working toward educational justice (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018).
2) Racially-minoritized parents and students, due to deficiencies in character, culture, and community, do not care about education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
3) To develop educational expertise an educational leader must hold a college degree (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Nygreen, 2016;).
4) Leadership for educational and social justice is a lonely and stressful role for educators who attempt such change (Theoharis, 2007).
5) A "good" parent of color is one who "defers to educators and places unquestioned faith in their authority" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 349).
6) Leadership is too much of a burden on parents and students (Fine, 1993; Hartney, 2014; McGuinn & Kelly, 2012).

Research Question: *How do under-resourced parents and students of color, organized for educational justice, interrogate the institutional racialized scripts reproduced within educational structures regarding educational leadership for social justice?*

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to engage in a social justice project that both actively empowers under-resourced parents and students of color, while also inquiring how organizing allows them to challenge hegemonic scripts developed and played out by educators regarding leadership for social justice. Using social justice praxis, this research is designed to interrogate these institutional racialized scripts or "stock stereotypes" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.28), and disrupt the inequitable educational structures built upon them.

Research Methodology: This research will use a multi-methodology that combines case study, critical race methodology (counternarratives), youth participatory action research, and critical evocative portraiture within a bounded case study.

Theoretical Model
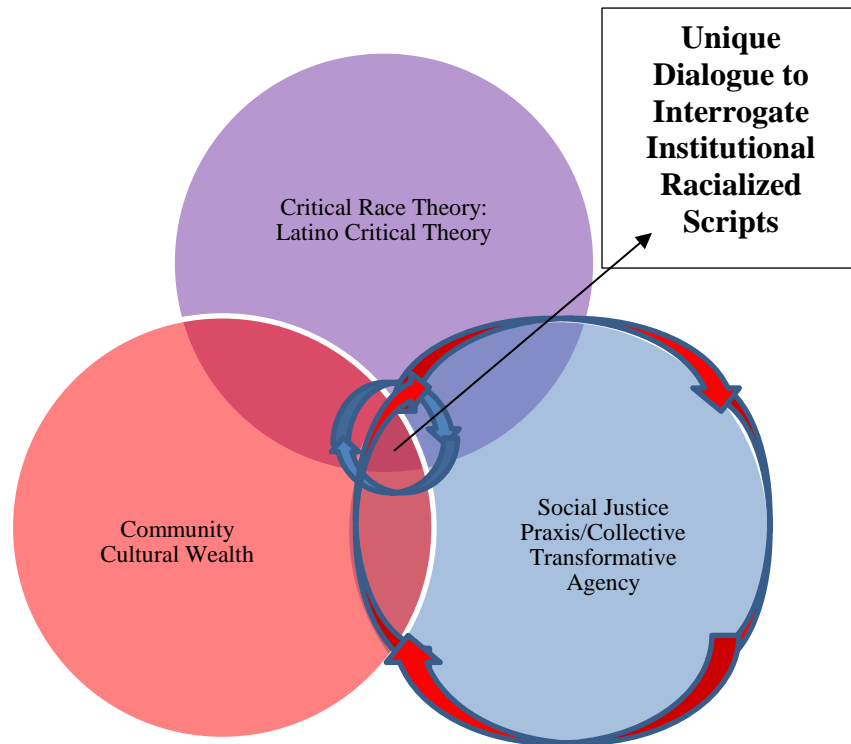
Parents and students of color use family and community assets and skills along with a sense of political consciousness and social justice praxis (reflection and action) to interrogate institutional racialized scripts.

- **Critical Race Theory/Latino Critical Theory** – Race and racism are central to experiences/The intersections of race and racism with experiences of biculturalism, bilingualism, immigration status, ethnicity, gender, etc. is central to experiences
- **Community Cultural Wealth** – Families and students use several different types of capital (assets or strengths) to succeed in school and in life. These capital include:
  - Aspirational capital- the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers
  - Linguistic capital- includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (p. 78);
  - Familial capital - those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition
  - Social capital- networks of people and community resources
  - Navigational capital - skills of maneuvering through social institutions
  - Resistant capital- those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005, p. 77-81)
- **Social Justice Praxis/Collective Transformative Agency** – Through questioning the status quo (developing political consciousness), parents and students begin a process of reflection and action creating something new and innovative.

- **Transformative Leadership** – Social justice leadership in education. Focuses on emancipation, democracy, equity, justice, and inequitable power structures in education and help to create activists for educational justice.

Critical Race Theory/Latino Critical Theory

Community Cultural Wealth

Social Justice Praxis/Collective Transformative Agency

Transformative Leadership

Would you consider Padres y Jovenes Unidos leadership transformative
leadership? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Interrogando a los guiones raciales

Problema de la investigación: Los educadores, incluyendo a líderes para la justicia social, tienen actitudes y creencias sobre los padres de escasos recursos y los estudiantes de color, que los excluyen del liderazgo en su propia educación. Esta exclusión se basa en guiones raciales institucionales que "son un plan para las identidades y acciones para diferentes roles dentro de una organización educativa" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 346). Los guiones institucionales son:

1) Sólo los directores, superintendentes y otros con poder posicional pueden ser líderes educativos que trabajan hacia la justicia educativa (Bertrand & rodela, 2018).
2) Los padres y estudiantes racialmente minoritized, debido a deficiencias en el carácter, la cultura y la comunidad, no se preocupan por la educación (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
3) Para desarrollar la maestría educativa un líder educativo debe tener un grado de la Universidad (Nygreen, 2016; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017).
4) El liderazgo para la justicia educativa y social es un papel solitario y estresante para los educadores que intentan tal cambio (Theoharis, 2007).
5) Los padres y los estudiantes son parte de la comunidad y por lo tanto están fuera del dominio político de la escuela.
6) Un "buen" padre de color es aquel que "cede a los educadores y coloca la fe incuestionable en su autoridad" (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017, p. 349).
7) El liderazgo es una carga excesiva para los padres y los estudiantes (Fine, 1993; Hartney, 2014; McGuinn & Kelly, 2012)
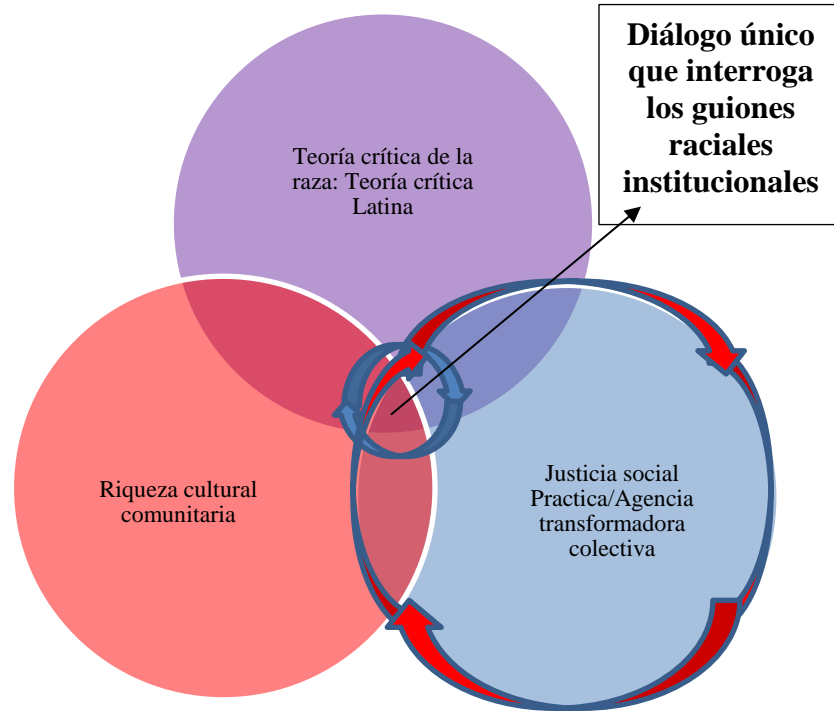
Pregunta de investigación: *¿Cómo los padres de escasos recursos y los estudiantes de color, organizados para la justicia educativa, interrogan a los guiones racistas institucionales reproducidos dentro de las estructuras educativas con respecto al liderazgo educativo para la justicia social?*

Propósito del estudio: El propósito de este estudio es participar en un proyecto de justicia social que empodera a ambos activamente, a los padres y estudiantes de bajo recursos y a los de color, mientras que también pregunta cómo al organización les permite desafiar los guiones hegemónicos desarrollados y desempeñados por educadores en cuanto al liderazgo para la justicia social. Usando la praxis de la justicia social, esta investigación está diseñada para interrogar a estos guiones raciales institucionales. o "estereotipos bursátiles" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28) y alteran las estructuras educativas injustas construidas sobre ellos.

Metodología de la investigación: Esta investigación utilizará una multi-metodología que combine la metodología crítica de la raza (contranarrativas), la

investigación de la acción participativa, y el retrato fenomenológico dentro de un caso de estudio limitado.

Modelo teórico

Teoría crítica de la raza: Teoría crítica Latina

Riqueza cultural comunitaria

Justicia social Practica/Agencia transformadora colectiva

Diálogo único que interroga los guiones raciales institucionales

Los padres y los estudiantes de color utilizan los activos y habilidades de la familia y la comunidad junto con un sentido de la conciencia política y la práctica de justicia social (reflexión y acción) para interrogar a los guiones raciales institucionales.

- **Teoría crítica de la raza/teoría crítica Latina** – La raza y el racismo son fundamentales para las experiencias/las intersecciones de raza y racismo con experiencias de biculturalismo, bilingüismo, estatus migratorio, etnicidad, género, etc. es fundamental para las experiencias.

- **Comunidad Riqueza cultural –** las familias y los estudiantes utilizan varios tipos diferentes de capital (activos o fortalezas) para triunfar en la escuela y en la vida. Estos capitales incluyen
    - Capital de aspiración-la capacidad de mantener esperanzas y sueños para el futuro, incluso frente a barreras reales y percibidas • capital lingüístico-incluye las habilidades intelectuales y sociales obtenidas a través de experiencias de comunicación en más de un idioma "(pág. 78);
    - Capital familiar-esos conocimientos culturales nutridos entre familia (Kin) que llevan un sentido de la historia de la comunidad, la memoria y la intuición cultural;
    - Capital social-redes de personas y recursos comunitarios;

- Capital de la navegación-destrezas de maniobra a través de instituciones sociales;
- Capital de resistencia,-esos conocimientos y destrezas fomentadas a través de comportamientos de oposición que desafían la desigualdad. (Yosso, 2005, p. 77-81)

- **Praxis de justicia social/Agencia transformadora colectiva –** a través de cuestionar el status quo (desarrollo de la conciencia política), los padres y los estudiantes comienzan un proceso de reflexión y acción creando algo nuevo e innovador.

- **Liderazgo transformador –** liderazgo de justicia social en la educación. Se centra en la emancipación, la democracia, la equidad, la justicia y las estructuras de poder inequitativas en la educación y ayudar a crear activistas para la justicia educativa.

Teoría crítica de la raza/Teoría crítica Latina

Riqueza cultural comunitaria

Justicia social praxis/Agencia transformadora colectiva

Liderazgo transformador

¿Considerarías a Padres y Jóvenes Unidos el liderazgo Transformativo del Liderazgo? ¿Por qué or por qué no?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

<u>Design Team Workshop #2 Protocol (3 hours)</u>

(A Spanish language translator will be provided. The Spanish language translator will mimic this protocol, including writing the group's responses on presentation paper. The translator will stay after the group for a half an hour to breakdown her impressions of the answers. She will include anything that may have been lost in translation.)

Get to the group 1 hour early to explain and have co-researchers fill out Consent Forms and Study Questionnaires (This will also occur in the 2 weeks leading up to the Design Team Workshop #2 through home visits and meetings at PJU office).

- Individuals who would like to be co-researchers will receive an explanation and sign the Consent Form (youth under 18 will need a legal guardian to sign the Consent Form). All forms and explanations will be available in Spanish and English.

Be sure all of those in attendance have signed the Consent Form.

Start the Design Team Workshop:

Introduce myself and my translator. Light snacks are provided. Participants can take a break and get a snack at any time and we will also be taking two 5-minute breaks. Provide bathroom information.

- Review the consent form. All activities are optional, and you may opt out at any time.

Explain the Design Team

- They are co-researchers, allowing them to inform the research interview protocols, review the data, code the data, and determine common themes and findings.
- Within individual interviews, the participants will individually help to develop the written portrait of themselves through interview, reflection, and dialogue.
- The group will not, however, know the true identities of the final portraits. Only the researcher will know this.
- Participants will be asked to help with presenting the final research to PJU in the end.

Explain that this Design Team Workshop is to review the finalized individual portraits and look for codes and themes developed and discuss findings.

Re-Introduce research problem, research question, racialized scripts, theoretical framework, and methodology. Review this on large presentation paper

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- Check for understanding, answer question and re-explain if necessary
- This will be a recap for co-researchers from Workshop #1 and short overview for new co-researchers

Handout short excerpt from a portrait (both in English and Spanish). Handout post-it notes and pens. On the wall will be a large presentation paper with one basic theme per paper determined from prior in vivo and thematic coding of all the portraits (These were the basic themes found in each portrait (ie. Immigration and culture, school experiences, PJU, Leadership, Beliefs, and Other). Additionally, another large presentation paper will contain the codes (descriptive, concept, in vivo, simultaneous, and thematic coding) to be taught and used and their definitions.

- Explain coding: descriptive, concept, in vivo, simultaneous, and thematic coding (Saldaña 2016). Explain that the portraits were developed using in vivo and thematic coding and that their coding will be another layer to this. Today we will be using concept, descriptive, simultaneous, and thematic coding.
- Explain that each person or group will read x number of portraits and code the portraits using descriptive and concept coding. The person or group will use one post-it note per code. They will write the name of the portrait at the top of the note and the code underneath. The person or group will then place the post-it note under one of the basic themes (on presentation paper on the wall). After all of the portraits have been coded everyone will come back together as a group and use the codes to thematically code the portraits.
- Walk through an example – Have a co-researcher read a paragraph from the excerpt (co-researchers will alternate readings between English and Spanish, so everyone is involved in the exercise). On a whiteboard the researcher will draw an example of a post-it note then ask the group to discuss the following per each paragraph:
  - What is the portrait's name? Write that on the top of the post-it note.
  - Do you feel this paragraph is important to the portrait? What descriptive or concept code could we use for this paragraph? Do we need to use more than one code (simultaneous coding)? Write that on the post-it note.
  - What basic theme would this go under? Put the post-it note under that theme.
  - Do this exercise several times until it appears that everyone in the group understands the coding process.

5 MINUTE BREAK- Light snacks and beverages will be provided. (After 45 minutes.

Split up the portraits based on how many co-researchers there are. This may be an individual activity, or this may be a group activity. Have the co-researchers read the portraits (out loud if in a group) and begin to code. (If a co-researcher speaks English only assign that person to a portrait that has been translated into Spanish. The translator will translate each of this person's codes back into English for the group.)

5 MINUTE BREAK- Light snacks and beverages will be provided. (After 1 hour and 15 minutes or once everyone has completed their coding).

Come back together as a group. The researcher will read the codes aloud to the group and the group will begin to identify themes. These themes will be written on the presentation paper of the larger basic themes and the post-it notes or codes will be moved to the new appropriate theme. (Be sure all co-researchers participate.)

Once all of the codes have been rearraigned into new themes the researcher will ask the group to discuss these themes and what they might mean to the findings of the study. This can be done as multiple groups or as one large group. The researcher will write these findings on a large presentation paper.

Answer any other questions.

Pass out reflection worksheet, have all co-researchers fill it out and collect.

END of WORKSHOP (The researcher will use this information in correlation with the themes and finding found by the researcher to write up the themes in Chapter 4 and the findings in Chapter 5.)

Reflections/ Reflexiones

What have you learned about others during this experience? ¿Qué has aprendido de los demás durante esta experiencia?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What have you learned about yourself? ¿Qué has aprendido sobre ti?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Individual Interview Protocols

- A Spanish language translator will be provided when needed for all interviews. The translator will stay after the interview for a half an hour to breakdown her impressions of the answers. She will include anything that may have been lost in translation.

- Individuals who would like to be participants will be explained and sign the Consent Form (youth under 18 will need the Consent Form signed by a legal guardian) and sign up for their initial interview on the Study Questionnaire. This will include the individuals name, phone number, email address, address, whether she/he is a parent or student, whether they are a member of Padres y Jovenes Unidos, translation needs, age, and where he/she would like to conduct the interview (i.e. Home, PJU, or other). All forms and explanations will be available in Spanish and English. Individuals will be instructed that the researcher will call and email them if they are selected to participate in the individual interviews. No participation will occur unless the Consent Form is signed with the requested signatures.

Parent Semi-Structured Individual Interview Protocol: Part I (60 minutes)

Introduce myself and the research study. Review the consent form. Be sure all consent forms are complete before starting the interview. Introduce my translator.

Throughout this interview I am going to ask you about two main topics:

- Yourself
- Your educational experience

Please be as detailed as possible with your answers. Start the audio recorder.

Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your family.
- Where were you born and where did you grow up?
- How old are you?
- What is your educational background? Where did you go to school? What level of education have you completed?
- What is your family make up? (Kids, spouse, parents) What grade were your children when you joined PJU? How old are they now? Where did they attend school?
- What is your ethnicity? What term do you identify with (Latinx, Chicanx, African American etc.)? Why? What is the ethnicity of your children?
- What language or languages do you speak? Do you feel this is an asset or a detriment to you living in the United States?
- Please describe your community and your culture?
- What is your favorite part about your culture and community?
- Please share with me a memory that you have about your culture and community?
- Have you or your family experienced racism? Please describe one of these instances? Did your experience change how you viewed yourself, your community, and/or your school?
- What are your hopes and dreams for the future of your family? Do you think you will achieve these? Have you experienced challenges in your life that got in the way of achieving these? How did you overcome those challenges?
- If you were talking to a stranger over the phone and you were going to meet them in a crowded place, how would you describe your personal appearance to them?

Please describe your educational experience

- What is your experience with school and with the district? Why do you feel this way?
- Please describe a memory you have that represents your experience with school or with the district.
- What is a "good" parent? Do you feel your parent was a "good" parent? Why?
- What assumptions do you think your child's teachers had about you, your family, and your culture? Please describe instances that made you think that? Are those assumptions correct? Why? Did you do anything to address or resist these assumptions? Please describe.
- Do you believe your experiences, your culture, your thoughts and dreams for the future matter to your child's teachers, his/her principal, and your district? Why? Have you done anything to make them matter more? Please describe an instance of this?
- What rights do you believe you have as a parent? Has your educational experience reflected these rights? How? If not, did you do anything to ensure your rights as a parent? Please describe an instance of this?
- Describe a challenge you had with your child's school or district? How did you navigate this challenge or solve it?

- What other information would you like to include that I have not asked you about? Would you like to expand on any of your previous answers?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts.

Give Reflection Form and instruct that the participant is to use the form to reflect on his/her interview today and write down any thoughts that he/she has before the next interview. I will collect the form at the next interview.

Schedule a time and place for the next interview. Explain what will occur at the next interview. Give a reminder call 48 hours in advance of the next interview.

Protocolo de Cuestionario para Padres Individuales: Parte I

Presentarme y el estudio de investigación. Revise el formulario de consentimiento. Asegúrese de que todos los formularios de consentimiento estén completos antes de comenzar la entrevista. Presentaré a mi traductor.
A lo largo de esta entrevista voy a preguntarle acerca de dos temas principales:

- Usted mismo
- Su experiencia educativa

Por favor, sea lo más detallado posible con sus respuestas.

Por favor, Cuénteme un poco sobre usted y su familia.

- ¿Dónde naciste y dónde creciste?
- ¿Qué edad tiene?
- ¿Cuál es su formación académica? ¿Adónde fuiste a la escuela? ¿Qué nivel de Educación ha completado?
- ¿De qué se compone su familia? (Niños, cónyuge, padres) ¿Qué grado cursaban sus hijos cuando se unió a PJU? ¿Qué edad tienen ahora? ¿Adónde asistieron a la escuela?
- ¿Cuál es su etnia? ¿A qué término se identifica (Latino Chicano, afroamericano, etc.)? ¿Porqué? ¿Cuál es la etnia de sus hijos?
- ¿Qué idioma o idiomas hablas? ¿Cree que esto es un activo o un perjuicio para usted que vive en los Estados Unidos?
- Por favor describa su comunidad y su cultura?
  Cuál es tu parte favorita de tu cultura y comunidad?
- Por favor, comparta conmigo un recuerdo que usted tenga sobre su cultura y comunidad?
- ¿Ha experimentado usted o su familia el racismo? Por favor, describa uno de estos casos? ¿Cambió su experiencia de cómo usted se veía a sí mismo, a su comunidad y/o a su escuela?
- ¿Cuáles son sus esperanzas y sueños para el futuro de su familia? ¿Crees que lograrán esto? ¿Has experimentado desafíos en tu vida que se interpusieron en el camino para lograrlo? ¿Cómo superaste esos desafíos?
- Si usted estaba hablando con un extraño por teléfono y usted iba a reunirse con ellos en un lugar lleno de gente, ¿cómo describiría su aspecto personal a ellos?

Por favor describa su experiencia educativa.

- ¿Cuál es su experiencia con la escuela y con el distrito? ¿Por qué te sientes así?
- Por favor describa una memoria que usted tenga que representa su experiencia con la escuela o con el distrito.
- ¿Qué es un padre "bueno"? ¿Sientes que tu padre era un padre "bueno"? ¿Porqué?
- ¿Qué suposiciones cree usted que los maestros de su hijo tenían sobre usted, su familia y su cultura? ¿Por favor describa las instancias que le hicieron pensar de esa manera? ¿Son correctas esas suposiciones? ¿Porqué? ¿Hizo algo para abordar o resistir estas suposiciones? Por favor, describa.
- ¿Cree usted que sus experiencias, su cultura, sus pensamientos y sueños para el futuro le interesan a los maestros de su hijo, su director, y su distrito? ¿Porqué? ¿Has hecho algo para que importen más? Por favor, describa una instancia de esto?
- ¿Qué derechos cree usted que tiene como padre? ¿Ha reflejado su experiencia educativa estos derechos? ¿Cómo? Si no, ¿hizo algo para asegurar sus derechos como padre? Por favor, describa una instancia de esto?
- Describa un desafío que tuvo con la escuela o el distrito de su hijo? ¿Cómo navegó este desafío y si lo resolvió?

Parent Semi-Structured Individual Interview Protocol: Part II (60 minutes)

Review the consent form. Be sure all consent forms are complete before starting the interview.

Throughout this interview I am going to ask you about two main topics:

- Your leadership
- Your involvement with PJU

Please be as detailed as possible with your answers. Start the audio recorder.

Please describe your experiences with leadership?

- What does leadership mean to you? What does educational leadership mean to you?
- Do you believe that students can be educational leaders? What makes you believe this?
- Do you think of yourself as an educational leader? Why? If yes, please describe an instance of your leadership?
- What makes a strong parent leader?
- Do you think educational leaders must have a college degree, such as the ones teachers, principals, and superintendents have? Why?
- What educational expertise do you possess as a parent? Please describe an instance that you used this expertise. If you did not, why not?
- Do you believe that parents should be at the forefront of educational justice work alongside teachers, principals, and other educators? Why?
- What should a parent's role be in creating educational justice?
- Have your child's teachers, school, district taken advantage of your expertise? How? How do you think they could take advantage of your expertise more?
- Have your child's teachers, school, district challenged your expertise? If yes how? What barriers did they use? Please describe an instance of this.
- How does your economic status and your immigration status (only if the parent has an immigration status) affect your ability to become a leader? What barriers do you face in becoming a leader?
- Do you think that leadership is a burden on parents? How do you ensure leadership does not become a burden on you or your family? Does PJU help with this burden? Do educators or the district help?

Please tell me about your involvement with PJU.

- When did you first become aware of the group?
- When and why did you first become a member?
- Describe your involvement now with PJU?
- What skills do you think you bring to PJU?
- What skills have they taught you?
- How has PJU developed your leadership? What methods did they use that helped you the most?
- What is the mission of PJU?
- What about PJU are you most passionate about?
- Do you believe you are a leader at PJU? Why? Describe an instance of your leadership?
- What does PJU do to challenge inequity?
- What skills do you personally use to challenge inequity?
- Is it easier to challenge inequity as an individual or as a group? Why?
- Describe a time that you resisted your teachers, principal, or district by yourself and when you did so collectively with PJU?
- Please describe your favorite memory as a member of PJU?
- Do you agree with everything PJU does and stands for? Are there things in PJU you do not agree with? What have you done to challenge the group if you disagree?
- Do you believe parents should question their child's teachers, principals and school district? Why?
- Has questioning and resisting the educational status quo transformed or changed your beliefs and thoughts about yourself, your children and education in general?
  - Has this changed your personal actions and how you live your life? Why?
- How has your activism with PJU been received by educators, your children, and other parents?
- Has PJU helped you as a parent? How?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts. Ask for a pseudonym.

Give Reflection Form and instruct that the participant is to use the form to reflect on his/her interview today and write down any thoughts that he/she has before the next interview. I will collect the form at the next interview.

Schedule a time and place for the next interview. Explain what will occur at the next interview. Give a reminder call 48 hours in advance of the next interview.

Protocolo de Cuestionario para Padres Individuales: Parte II

Revise el formulario de consentimiento. Asegúrese de que todos los formularios de consentimiento estén completos antes de comenzar la entrevista.

A lo largo de esta entrevista voy a preguntarle acerca de dos temas principales:

- Su liderazgo
- Su participación en el PJU

Por favor, sea lo más detallado posible con sus respuestas.

Por favor describa sus experiencias con el liderazgo?

- ¿Qué significa el liderazgo para ti? ¿Qué significa para ti el liderazgo educativo?
- ¿Crees que los estudiantes pueden ser líderes educativos? ¿Qué te hace creer esto?
- ¿Te consideras un líder educativo? ¿Por qué? Si es así, por favor describa una instancia de su liderazgo?
- ¿Qué hace que un padre líder fuerte?
- ¿Crees que los líderes educativos deben tener un título universitario, como los que tienen los maestros, directores y superintendentes? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué experiencia educativa posee como padre? Describa una instancia en la que haya utilizado esta experiencia. Si no lo hiciste, ¿por qué no?
- Cree que los padres deben estar a la vanguardia del trabajo de justicia educativa junto con los maestros, directores y otros educadores? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuál debería ser el rol de los padres en la creación de justicia educativa?
- ¿Los maestros, la escuela y el distrito de su hijo han aprovechado su experiencia? ¿Cómo? ¿Cómo crees que podrían aprovechar más tu experiencia?
- ¿Los maestros, la escuela, el distrito de su hijo han desafiado su experiencia? Si es así, ¿cómo? ¿Qué barreras usaron? Por favor describa una instancia de esto.
- ¿Cómo su estado económico y su estado de inmigración (solo si el padre tiene un estado de inmigración) afecta su capacidad para convertirse en un líder? ¿Qué barreras enfrentas para convertirte en un líder?
- ¿Crees que el liderazgo es una carga para los padres? ¿Cómo garantiza que el liderazgo no se convierta en una carga para usted o su familia? ¿PJU ayuda con esta carga? ¿Ayudan los educadores o el distrito?

Por favor, dígame acerca de su participación en PJU.

- ¿Cuándo te diste cuenta por primera vez del grupo?
- ¿Cuándo y por qué te hiciste miembro por primera vez?
- Describe tu participación ahora con PJU?
- ¿Qué habilidades crees que traes a PJU?
- ¿Qué habilidades te han enseñado?
- ¿Cómo ha desarrollado PJU su liderazgo? ¿Qué métodos usaron que te ayudaron más?
- ¿Cuál es la misión de PJU?
- ¿Qué es lo que más te apasiona de PJU?
- ¿Crees que eres un líder en PJU? ¿Por qué? Describe una instancia de tu liderazgo?
- ¿Qué hace PJU para desafiar la inequidad?
- ¿Qué habilidades usas personalmente para desafiar la inequidad?
- ¿Es más fácil desafiar la inequidad como individuo o como grupo? ¿Por qué?
- Describa un momento en el que se resistió a sus maestros, director o distrito por sí mismo y cuándo lo hizo colectivamente con PJU favorita como miembro de PJU?
- ¿Estás de acuerdo con todo lo que PJU hace y representa? ¿Hay cosas en PJU con las que no está de acuerdo? ¿Qué has hecho para desafiar al grupo si no estás de acuerdo?
- ¿Cree que los padres deberían cuestionar a los maestros, directores y distrito escolar de sus hijos? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuestionar y resistir el status quo educativo ha transformado o cambiado sus creencias y pensamientos sobre usted, sus hijos y la educación en general? Por favor describa su memoria favorita como miembro de PJU?
- ¿Estás de acuerdo con todo lo que PJU hace y representa? ¿Hay cosas en PJU con las que no está de acuerdo? ¿Qué has hecho para desafiar al grupo si no estás de acuerdo?
- ¿Cree que los padres deberían cuestionar a los maestros, directores y distrito escolar de sus hijos? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuestionar y resistir el status quo educativo ha transformado o cambiado sus creencias y pensamientos sobre usted, sus hijos y la educación en general? Esto ha cambiado tus acciones personales y cómo vives tu vida? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cómo ha sido recibido su activismo con PJU por los educadores, sus hijos y otros padres?
- ¿PJU te ha ayudado como padre? ¿Cómo?

Student Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol: Part I (60 Minutes)

Introduce myself and the research study. Review the consent form. Be sure all consent, including parental consent (if needed) are complete before starting the interview.

Throughout this interview I am going to ask you about two main topics:
- Yourself
- Your educational experience

Please be as detailed as possible with your answers. Start the audio recorder.

Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your family.

- How old are you? How old were you when you became a member of PJU?
- Where were you born and where did you grow up?
- Where did you go to school? Are you currently in school now?
- What is your family make up? (Kids, spouse, parents)
- What was your family makeup when you were in school (for past students)?
- What is your ethnicity? What term do you identify with (Latinx, Chicanx, African American etc.)? Why?
- What language or languages do you speak? Do you feel this is an asset or a detriment to you living in the United States?
- Please describe your community and your culture?
- What is your favorite part about your culture and community?
- Please share with me a memory that you have about your culture and community?
- Have you or your family experienced racism? Please describe one of these instances? Did your experience change how you viewed yourself, your community, and/or your school?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your future and the future of your family? Do you think you will achieve these? Have you experienced challenges in your life that got in the way of achieving these? How did you overcome those challenges?
- If you were talking to a stranger over the phone and you were going to meet them in a crowded place, how would you describe your personal appearance to them?

Please describe your educational experience.

- What is your experience with school and with the district? Why do you feel this way?
- Please describe a memory you have that represents your experience with school or with the district.
- What is a "good" student? Do you feel you are or were a good student? Why?
- What assumptions do you think your teachers had about you, your family, and your culture? Please describe instances that made you think that? Are those assumptions correct? Why? Did you do anything to address or resist these assumptions? Please describe.
- Do you believe your experiences, your culture, your thoughts and dreams for the future matter to your teachers, your principal, and your district? Why? Have you done anything to make them matter more? Please describe an instance of this?
- Who has helped you the most through school and in achieving your hopes and dreams? Please describe an experience of how he or she helped you?
- If you were to mentor a younger student through school, what is the biggest piece of advice you would give him/her?
- What rights do you believe you have as a student? Has your educational experience reflected these rights? How? If not, did you do anything to ensure your rights as a student? Please describe an instance of this?
- Describe a challenge you had in school? How did you navigate this challenge or solve it?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts. Ask for a pseudonym.

Give Reflection Form and instruct that the participant is to use the form to reflect on his/her interview today and write down any thoughts that he/she has before the next interview. I will collect the form at the next interview.

Schedule a time and place for the next interview. Explain what will occur at the next interview. Give a reminder call 48 hours in advance of the next interview.

<u>**Student Semi-structured Individual Interview Protocol: Part II (60 minutes)**</u>

Review the consent form. Be sure all consent, including parental consent (if needed) are complete before starting the interview.

Throughout this interview I am going to ask you about two main topics:
- Your leadership
- Your involvement with PJU

Please be as detailed as possible with your answers. Start audio recorder.

Please describe your experiences with leadership?

- What does leadership mean to you? What does educational leadership mean to you?
- Do you believe that students can be educational leaders? What makes you believe this?
- Do you think of yourself as an educational leader? Why? If yes, please describe an instance of your leadership?
- What makes a strong student leader?
- Do you think educational leaders must have a college degree, such as the ones teachers, principals, and superintendents have? Why?
- What educational expertise do you possess as a student? Please describe an instance that you used this expertise. If you did not, why not?
- Do you believe that students should be at the forefront of educational justice work alongside teachers, principals, and other educators? Why?
- What should a student's role be in creating educational justice?
- Have your teachers, school, district taken advantage or your expertise? How? How do you think they could take advantage of your expertise more?
- Have your teachers, school, district challenged your expertise? If yes how? What barriers did they use? Please describe an instance of this.
- How does your economic status and your immigration status (only if the student has an immigration status) affect your ability to become a leader? What barriers do you face in becoming a leader?
- Do you think that leadership is a burden on students? How do you ensure leadership does not become a burden on you or your family? Does PJU help with this burden? Do educators or the district help?

Please tell me about your involvement with PJU.

- When did you first become aware of the group?
- When and why did you first become a member?
- Describe your involvement now with PJU?
- What skills do you think you bring to PJU?
- What skills have they taught you?
- How has PJU developed your leadership? What methods did they use that helped you the most?
- What is the mission of PJU?
- What about PJU are you most passionate about?
- Do you believe you are a leader at PJU? Why? Describe an instance of your leadership?
- What does PJU do to challenge inequity?
- What skills do you personally use to challenge inequity?
- Is it easier to challenge inequity as an individual or as a group? Why?
- Describe a time that you resisted your teachers, principal, or district by yourself and when you did so collectively with PJU?
- Please describe your favorite memory as a member of PJU?
- Do you agree with everything PJU does and stands for? Are there things in PJU you do not agree with? What have you done to challenge the group if you disagree?
- Do you believe students should question their teachers, principals and school district? Why?
- Has questioning and resisting the educational status quo transformed or changed your beliefs and thoughts about yourself and education in general? Has this changed your personal actions and how you live your life? Why?
- How has your activism with PJU been received by educators, parents, and other students?
- Has PJU helped you as a student? How?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts.

Give Reflection Form and instruct that the participant is to use the form to reflect on his/her interview today and write down any thoughts that he/she has before the next interview. I will collect the form at the next interview.

Schedule a time and place for the next interview. Explain what will occur at the next interview. Give a reminder call 48 hours in advance of the next interview.

Appendix E: Participant Reflection Form

Reflection Form

To be turned in to Stefanie at the next interview. Feel free to use the back or a different sheet of paper if you run out of room.

After this interview are there things you forgot to mention?	
How do you feel about this interview?	
What thoughts or experiences do you want to bring up at the next interview?	
Is there anything Stefanie can do to make the next interview easier?	

Forma de reflexion

Para ser entregado a Stefanie en la próxima entrevista. Siéntase libre de usar el reverso o una hoja de papel diferente si se queda sin espacio.

Después de esta entrevista, ¿hay cosas que olvidaste mencionar?	
¿Cómo te sientes acerca de esta entrevista?	
¿Qué pensamientos o experiencias desea plantear en la próxima entrevista?	
¿Hay algo que Stefanie pueda hacer para facilitar la próxima entrevista?	
¿Qué pensamientos, sentimientos y / o preguntas quieres que sepa Stefanie? Esto puede ser sobre cualquier cosa.	

Appendix F: Leadership Background Protocol and Staff Interview Protocols

Leadership Background Protocol: Leadership Team
(60 Minutes)

- Please tell me about the history of Padres and what major events have led to the organization's current work?
    o Major Events
    o Youth Participation
    o Current Campaigns

- How would you describe the structure of Padres?
    o Leadership
    o Recruitment
    o Training
    o Funding

- Please tell me about Padres' past, current and future involvement with DPS?
    o School-to-Prison Pipeline
    o Demands for new Superintendency
    o Other

- What are some of Padres' other campaigns or goals?
    o State-wide initiatives
    o How do you manage resources such as staff, recruitment, leadership, funding for all the work that you do?

- Is there any other information you would like me to know going forward?

- Do you have any questions for me?

Individual Staff Interview Protocol
(60-90 minutes)

Introduce myself and the study. Review signed Consent Form. Start audio recording.

- Please tell me a little bit about yourself?
- What is your title at Padres? Please describe your job at Padres? (Go detailed) What are the qualifications for your job?
- How does your position help Padres meet their goals?
- How did you become involved with Padres? How do you see yourself in the future in relation to Padres? What are your personal and professional goals?
- Do you believe you represent the communities you are working for? Why or why not?
- How do you define leadership?
- Do you think that Padres is an educational leader? Why or why not?
- Do you believe you are a leader? Why or why not?
- What training have you had at Padres?
- Do you believe this helped you become a leader at Padres, community, schools?
- Please recall an event or story where you yourself or the organization demonstrated leadership?
- Please describe your favorite memory while working at Padres?
- If you had to describe Padres in one word what would that be and why?
- What have been your challenges working for Padres?
- What have you learned from working at Padres?
- Is there other information you would like me to know going forward that I have not asked about?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts. Ask for a pseudonym.

Individual Staff Interview Protocol: Co Executive Director
(60 minutes)

Introduce myself and the study. Review signed Consent Form. Start audio recording.

- Please tell me a little bit about yourself?
- What is your title at Padres? Please describe your job at Padres? (Go detailed) What are the qualifications for your job?
- How does your position help Padres meet their goals?
- How did you become involved with Padres? How do you see yourself in the future in relation to Padres? What are your personal and professional goals?
- Please recall an event or story where you yourself or the organization demonstrated leadership?
- Please describe your favorite memory while working at Padres?
- If you had to describe Padres in one word what would that be and why?
- What type of leader do you think you are?
- How will your leadership differ from past Co Executive Directors or founders?
- What is a moment that defines your leadership?
- What have been your challenges working for Padres?
- What have you learned from working at Padres?
- As Executive Director, what are your hopes and dreams for Padres? Where do you see the organization in 10 years?
- What is it about Padres that really sets it apart from other organizing organizations?
- Please tell me about this new chapter in Padres?
- Please tell me about your national coalition work?
- What was Padres' collective reaction to the 2016 election? What did you mean by putting out fires in the PJU Strategic Meeting?
- Please describe the 501 C4 and your political work?
- Is there other information you would like me to know going forward that I have not asked about?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Stop the audio recorder and take pictures of the participant, the surroundings, and any other important personal artifacts. Ask for a pseudonym.

Study Questionnaire

Name _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Name (if under 18) _____

Phone _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Phone (if under 18) _____

Email _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Email (if under 18) _____

Address _____

Are you a parent or student (please see definition below):

<div align="center">

Parent   Student

</div>

- **Parent-** *In this research a parent is defined as an adult who is responsible or has been responsible for the well-being of a student.*
- **Student-** *In this research a student is defined as a young person who is currently attending an elementary, middle, or secondary school. This definition includes adults who became a member of Padres y Jovenes Unidos while still in school and youth who dropped out of school in the past five years.*

Are you a member of Padres y Jovenes Unidos? Yes   No

Will you need a translator for your interview? Yes   No

If yes, what language should the translator speak? Spanish Other ____

- *If selected to participate in the study, Stefanie, the researcher, will call and email you. Participants will participate in three 60 minute interviews between October 2018 and February 2019. These interviews will be scheduled around your schedule. Only you and the researcher will know if you are participating in the study. Your information will be kept confidential.*

If you are selected what date, time, and place would you like to have your first interview?

Date: _____

Time (this could be day or night): _____

Address of Place (this can take place at your home, at Padres y Jovenes Unidos, or another place of your choosing): _____

Cuestionario de estudio

Nombre _____

Nombre del padre / tutor legal (si es menor de 18 años) _____

Teléfono_____

Teléfono del padre / tutor legal (si es menor de 18 años)_____

Email _____

Correo electrónico del padre / tutor legal (si es menor de 18 años)

Dirección_____

¿Es usted padre o estudiante? (Consulte la definición a continuación):
Padre   Estudiante

- **Padre:** *En esta investigación, un padre se define como un adulto que es responsable o ha sido responsable del bienestar de un estudiante.*
- **Estudiante:** *En esta investigación, un estudiante se define como una persona joven que actualmente asiste a una escuela primaria, media o secundaria. Esta definición incluye a los adultos que se convirtieron en miembros de Padres y Jóvenes Unidos cuando aún estaban en la escuela y los jóvenes que abandonaron la escuela en los últimos cinco años.*

¿Eres miembro de Padres y Jovenes Unidos?   SI   NO

¿Necesitará un traductor para su entrevista?   SI   NO

En caso afirmativo, ¿qué idioma debe hablar el traductor?   Español

Otro _____

- *Si es seleccionado para participar en el estudio, Stefanie, la investigadora, lo llamará y le enviará un correo electrónico. Los participantes participarán en tres entrevistas de 60 minutos entre octubre de 2018 y febrero de 2019. Estas entrevistas se programarán según su horario. Solo usted y el investigador sabrán si está participando en el estudio. Tu información se mantendrá confidencial.*

Si se selecciona qué fecha, hora y lugar le gustaría tener su primera entrevista?

Fecha: _____

Hora (esto podría ser de día o de noche): _____

Dirección del lugar (esto puede llevarse a cabo en su hogar, en Padres y Jovenes Unidos u otro lugar de su elección): _____

Participant Name: _____

Has the individual been chosen to participate in the study? Yes   No

**Have you notified the participant and reconfirmed the first interview?
Yes   No**

**If participating, what date did the individual (and/or her/his legal
guardian sign the Consent/Assent Form?**_____

**Have you given the participant a copy of the Consent/Assent Form?
Yes No**

Appendix H: Participant Demographics

Name	Student/Parent	Age	Language	Immigration Status	Marital Status	Children
Alejandro	Student	21	English/Spanish	DACA	Single	0
Yadira	Student	33	English/Spanish	DACA	Single	0
Julia	Student	18	English/Spanish	US Citizen	Single	0
Lilianna	Student	18	English/Spanish	US Citizen	Single	0
Lara	Parent	47	Spanish	Undocumented	Married	5
Miriam	Parent	47	Spanish	Undocumented	Single	3
Miranda	Parent	35	Spanish	Undocumented	Married	3
Ximena	Parent	42	Spanish	Undocumented	Single	2