🌱 Sembrando Cambios: Latinx (Im)migrant Farmworker Families Navigating and Challenging a Racialized School for Dual Credit Access

Henedina Tavares

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
University of Washington
2024

Reading Committee:
Julia Duncheon, Chair
Manka Varghese
Nancy Beadie

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
College of Education

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Henedina Tavares

University of Washington

Abstract

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Henedina Tavares

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Julia Duncheon

College of Education

Over the last two decades, dual credit programs have emerged as viable pathways to postsecondary completion. Despite their potential, these programs remain largely untapped by high school students and their families who experience historical and ongoing educational injustices. This study explores the racialized organizational dynamics at a rural high school that influence the distribution of dual credit information and resources and their implications for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families. Using a qualitative research design grounded in Chicana feminist epistemology, this research investigates the extent to which these dynamics shape access for families, how families navigate institutional barriers, and the strategies they propose to improve equity in accessing dual credit opportunities. The study draws on theories of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) and LatCrit in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001), and employs multiple qualitative methods to gather data. The findings highlight how organizational practices and ideologies perpetuate inequities in dual credit access and underscore the experiential knowledge of families as starting points for change-making.

Dedication

A mis abuelitos en el cielo y pilares de mi ser: Marcelina Landeros Tavares, Pedro Tavares Sr., y Alejandro Vega

Acknowledgements

I begin this journey of gratitude by honoring those who first planted the seeds of knowledge and have continued to nurture my growth: my family and community.

Extiendo mi más profunda gratitud a mis padres, Eladia Tavares y Pedro Tavares, mi reserva de fuerza, quienes me recuerdan cada día que soy una luchadora, una guerrera. En sus manos callosas, en su andar incansable, se forjó el camino que hoy recorro con orgullo. Este logro es tan suyo como mío, un fruto de su trabajo, un reflejo de su amor. A ustedes, les dedico cada paso, cada palabra escrita, cada sueño alcanzado. Porque en sus historias, en sus luchas, se encuentra la esencia de todo lo que soy.

To my brothers, Carlos and Daniel Tavares, I owe you both more than words can express. Carlos, thank you for keeping my Netflix and streaming subscriptions going— those moments of relaxation kept me sane through the late nights and early mornings. Daniel, your support in helping me bring my ideas to life, from brainstorming sessions to crafting presentations, has been a gift. You both have been my constant sources of encouragement and laughter, and for that, I am endlessly grateful.

To my niece, Esmeralda Tavares, thank you for teaching me to be present and enjoy the moment-to-moment interactions. To my sister-in-law, Edelyn Deborah Tavares Viovicente, thank you for introducing me to the bougie things in life. Jennifer Salgado Vega and Marisol Vega, *mis hermanitas*, thank you for being my lifelong companions. *Y a mi abuelita, Ricarda Vega Ramales, gracias por compartir sus recuerdos de infancia y recordarme que hay que "echarle galleta" – una lección que siempre llevaré conmigo.*

To Luis Miguel Ballesteros, my Day One and LOML, thank you for being a gentle and guiding light throughout this PhD journey. From the moment we met, your love has been my anchor, grounding me through every challenge and lifting me in every moment of joy. Your light has made all the difference, transforming this journey into one we have walked together. I am also grateful to the Ballesteros family for welcoming me with open arms and offering their love and encouragement along the way. #BrownLoveIsRevolutionary

To the Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families who generously shared their experiences with me, your courage and resilience in the face of systemic inequities have been both inspiring and humbling. Thank you for helping me embody the spirit of "*¿A qué le tiras cuando sueñas, mexicano?*" and for reminding me of the power of our collective dreams.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Julia Duncheon, for her guidance and steadfast belief in the importance of this research. Your feedback and encouragement have been critical in shaping this work. I am grateful for how you always made yourself available and went above and beyond in every capacity. Your validation of my experiences navigating a doctoral program as a Woman of Color, with all its politics, has been incredibly affirming.

To my dissertation committee members:

Dr. Manka Varghese, whom I first met as an undergraduate student in your course on teaching multilingual and multicultural students. Your class shaped the trajectory of my studies, and I am deeply grateful for your guidance. Thank you also for welcoming me and your other advisees into your home and feeding us!

Dr. Nancy Beadie, who was my advisor until her retirement in 2023, has been my greatest champion since I first met her 11 years ago. You have written countless letters of recommendation for me, encouraged me to explore various angles of my research, and allowed me to spread my wings. You have been there through thick and thin, offering guidance, wisdom, and unwavering belief in my potential. There are no words to fully describe what you mean to me. I am honored and grateful to have been guided by you.

Dr. Michelle Habell-Pallán, whose class provided the medicine I needed during a difficult phase in my doctoral journey. Thank you for creating a healing space.

A special thanks to my colleagues at UW, who provided a supportive intellectual community: Dr. Aditi Rajendran, Dr. Alina Mendez, Camille Ungco, Dr. Charlene Nolan, Dr. Connie So, Dr. Cristina Gaeta, Dr. Ishmael Miller, Dr. Jazmen Moore, Dr. Jenée Myers Twitchell, Dr. Jessica Salvador, Dr. Kayla Mendoza Chui, Dr. Lamar Foster, Dr. Min Hwangbo, Dr. Soleil Boyd, and Dr. William White. Your insights and holding space for kinship relations have been instrumental in my academic journey.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Asha Warsame, whose friendship has been a source of strength and inspiration. Your presence has not only uplifted me but has also reminded me of the power of sisterhood and solidarity. Sis, we did it!

From the 509 to the 206, a huge shoutout to my squad for always keeping it real. Thanks for the life advice, *chisme*, the endless laughs, and the countless meals that fueled me through this journey: Jessica González, Virginia (Vicky) Frausto, David Salmerón, Blanca Macias, Alejandra Silva Hernández, Patricia (Trish) Addison Connolly, Jamie Valencia, Annel Garcia, Arianna Garcia, Levi Hagert, Benjamin Lee, Zach Lamebull, and Eric Eto.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the funders who made this journey possible, with special thanks to the Sinegal UW Graduate and Professional Fellowship, COE Community Partner Fellowship, UW Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, and the Doi Doctoral Research Award.

This dissertation is a testament to the power of community, resilience, and the pursuit of equity. It is dedicated to the countless individuals, families, and communities who continue to fight for a more just and equitable educational system—one that honors and uplifts the diverse voices and experiences of all learners. It is also a tribute to the voices that have been silenced but never stopped speaking, and to the generations who have come before us, paving the way with their *conocimientos y sabiduría.*

Table of Contents

Abstract ... **iii**
Dedication ... **iv**
Acknowledgements ... **v**
Table of Contents ... **ix**
List of Tables ... **xi**
List of Figures ... **xii**
Preface ... **xiii**
Chapter 1 ... **1**
Towards un Futuro Bonito ... **1**
  Contextualizing Research on Racialized College Preparation and the Role of Latinx Parents ... 5
  Purpose ... 14
  Research Questions ... 15
  Theoretical and Methodological Approach ... 16
  Organization of the Dissertation ... 18
Chapter 2 ... **20**
Tejiendo una Teoría de Cambio: Racialized Organizations and LatCrit Theory ... **20**
  College Preparatory Programs, Racialized Tracking, and the Exclusion of Latinx Families ... 20
  A Multidisciplinary Framework of Educational Justice ... 49
  Chapter 2 Summary ... 65
Chapter 3 ... **67**
Learning about Racialized Schools from Latinx (Im)migrant Farmworker Families ... **67**
  Research Design and Methodology ... 67
  Washington State's Dual Credit Programs ... 69
  Research Method ... 72
  Data Collection ... 80
  Data Analysis ... 88
  Trustworthiness and Rigor ... 93
  Chapter 3 Summary ... 97
Chapter 4 ... **98**
Racialized Schools and Family Strategies ... **98**
  Part I: Racialized Tracking at Central High School ... 98
  Part II: Legitimizing Inequities in Dual Credit Resources and Agency ... 104
  Part III: Latinx (Im)migrant Families as Agentic Knowers ... 131
  Chapter 4 Summary ... 147

Chapter 5 148
Leveraging Latinx (Im)migrant Experiential Knowledge to De-Racialize Dual Credit Access 148
- Research Motivation and Purpose 149
- Research Design and Limitations 150
- Review of Theories: Racialized Organizations and LatCrit Framework 154
- Findings: Theoretical and Empirical Significance 157
- Implications for Policy and Practice 172
- Directions for Future Research 174
- Conclusion 176

References 178
Appendix A 217
- Parent Interview Guide 217

Appendix B 219
- Table 5: Overview of Plática Sessions 219

List of Tables

Table 1: *Four Tenets of Racialized Organizations*……………………………………………51

Table 2: *Six types of dual credit programs offered in Washington State*……………………...72

Table 3: *Participant Demographics*…………………………………………………………..79

Table 4: *Levels of Analysis, Ray (2019)*...155

List of Figures

Figure 1: *Percent of Students Completing a DE and AP Course by Gender and Race*…………10

Figure 2: *Five Tenets of LatCrit Theory*………………………………………………………59

Figure 3: *Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations*…………………………65

Figure 4: *Percent of Students Completing a Dual Credit Course by Race*……………………...75

Figure 5: *Percent of Students Completing a Dual Credit Course by Language Learner Status*..76

Figure 6: *Percent of Students Enrolled in at Least 1 AP Math Course*…………………………76

Figure 7: *Percent of Students Enrolled in at Least 1 CTE STEM Course*………………………76

Figure 8: *Model for Concurrent Data Collection and Analysis. Adapted from Saldaña, 2021*…88

Figure 9: *Dedoose Packed Code Cloud Graphic*………………………………………………..91

Figure 10: *Dedoose Code Co-Occurrence Graphic*……………………………………………..91

Figure 11: *Example of Memo Notes Revisited in Dedoose*……………………………………...93

Figure 12: *Website Spanish Translation*………………………………………………………..112

Figure 13: *Untranslated Website Content*……………………………………………………...113

Figure 14: *Principal's Message on the School Website*………………………………………..123

Figure 15: *Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations*………………………156

Preface

Immigrant Farmworker Hands That Sow Futures

In the core of this (im)migrant heartbeat,
Where Mexican rhythms and hard work meet,
I grew up watching dreams woven in sweat and tears,
Hearing stories of *sacrificio*, feeling ancestral fears.

Papi's hands, scarred landscapes of work and grind,
Telling *testimonios* of sunburnt days, of a future he had in mind.
Each cough, each rasp, a reminder of toxins breathed,
Whispers of the poison fields where dreams are sheathed.

And *mami's* hands, arthritic, yet never resting, never done,
Hours on the line, sorting cherries, one by one.
But in their weariness, in their very form,
Lie dreams of *futuros*, warm and transformed.

These were not just hands, but maps of dreams so grand,
For me, my siblings, for every child on this land.
Promises sown deep, hopes intertwined,
To *lugares* beyond fields, beyond sun, and time.
Rising, always rising, with an unwavering stride,
With every pulse, every beat, a legacy redefined.

-Henedina Tavares

I grew up in the Solano Valley[1], where this study takes place, a spatial area denoted by racialized farmworker labor. Here, my immigrant parents, like countless others, have felt the subjugations to the body working in agriculture, literally felt in the bones, that became the basis for their aspirations—their *anhelos*—for their children's futures. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to interview them for a research project as part of a doctoral milestone where I asked them what their educational dreams were for their children and the broader community. My mami's voice, heavy with experience, revealed (E. Tavares, personal communication, January 10, 2019):

> Siempre les dijimos a nuestros hijos que aprendan de nosotros. Porque así como nosotros trabajamos en la labor que ellos aprendan, que aunque esté sol, que a veces el sol es muy fuerte, trabajar en la labor, no nos rendimos, seguimos con fuerza…Nuestro mayor deseo es ver a nuestros hijos convertirse en profesionales y avanzar hacia el futuro. Pero que nunca olviden el pasado, ya que eso les da la fuerza para continuar; les da fuerza a nuestros hijos que ellos le echen esas ganas, y esa fuerza para seguir adelante.

> *We always tell our children to learn from us. Because just as we work hard in [agriculture], they should learn that even in the intense heat, sometimes the sun is very strong, we don't give up, we continue with resiliency…Our greatest wish is to see our children become professionals and move towards the future. But they should never forget the past, as it gives them the strength to continue; it gives our children the drive and determination to keep moving forward.*

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[1] All locations and participant names are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Her *deseo*, anchored in a longing for a professional life far removed from oppressive labor systems, interwove with the *consejo* she ardently shared. Her kernel of sociocultural wisdom stressed the importance of postsecondary education by reminding me of the arduous labor they have endured and finding strength to rise above adversity. My papi's vision reflected this sentiment, yearning for a future where the next generation, prepared with a postsecondary degree, can have access to professions with good benefits (P. Tavares, personal communication, January 10, 2019):

> Siendo un trabajador inmigrante, tenemos que trabajar muy duro, demasiado, nos esforzamos mucho. Y eso lo transmitimos a nuestros hijos, que ellos deben de trabajar duro en sus estudios, esforzarse para que alcancen sus metas y logren sus sueños que tienen en la vida…Que ellos logren su carrera que hayan iniciado y que se realicen como unas personas profesionales. Y que logren su título y logren trabajar en un lugar donde haya buenos beneficios, porque nosotros, los trabajadores del campo y migrantes, no gozamos de muchos beneficios. Y eso sería algo muy grandioso, muy formidable para que nuestros hijos lograran todo eso.

> *As an immigrant [farm]worker, we have to work very hard, too hard; we put in a lot of effort. And we pass that wisdom on to our children, telling them that they must work hard in their studies, strive to achieve their goals, and accomplish the dreams they have in life…We hope they complete the careers they've started and become successful professionals. We wish for them to obtain their degrees and find work in places with good benefits because we, farmworkers and immigrants, don't enjoy many benefits. And it would be truly wonderful and outstanding if our children achieved all of that.*

Despite their resilient aspirations for their children's postsecondary education, families like my Mexican (im)migrant parents found themselves marginalized by an educational system that failed to provide them with the necessary information and resources. Let alone they were never positioned as agentic knowers whose wisdom and expertise could shape school agendas towards improving access to postsecondary resources and opportunities. At my core (and learned from lived realities), I knew the reason: schools are far from neutral. Rather, operating under white normativity, their structures and practices are deeply racialized, influencing outcomes and perpetuating inequities.

This desire to delve deeper into how schools as social organizations often reproduce racial dynamics to create inequities was further fueled by a candid conversation with Reid Becker, an administrator at Central High School ("Central"). This high school, situated in the valley where I grew up, served as a symbolic nexus, linking education, migration, and the labor environment that surrounds it. Reid had long suspected that Latinx students, particularly those from nondominant backgrounds, were being funneled into lower academic tracks and excluded from accelerated college preparatory programs at a higher rate than their white peers. His interactions with Latinx students supported this view:

> I've had them in agriculture [science] and they're like, "[Becker], I don't even want to go into agriculture [science], my counselor just gave me this class." And it's like, wow... they're already pigeonholed that they might not be successful in an academic class.

His observation pointed to an inequitable distribution of opportunities, driven by deep-seated racial ideologies that shape the everyday actions of school actors in producing differential expectations for youth of color and their families. Recognizing that accelerated college preparatory programs represent a gateway for transformation and liberation from exploitative labor conditions for Mexican (im)migrant families, I was left grappling with several pressing questions: To what extent does the racialized context of Central High School shape the access or lack of access to information on dual credit programs for Mexican (im)migrant families? How do parents react to institutional practices around dual credit information? Importantly, do they have a platform within the school to voice their priorities and contribute ideas for making accelerated college preparatory programs more accessible?

These questions became the cornerstone of my study, illuminating the reality that school organizations are not immune to racial dynamics. Far from being neutral, they actively (re)produce racialization through settled practices and ideologies. My research also explores how these dynamics can be challenged through the collective cultural knowledge and agency of subaltern families. By centering the experiences and perspectives of Mexican (im)migrant parents, this dissertation aims to expose racialized inequities in accessing dual credit opportunities and open more expansive possibilities for change.

Chapter 1

Towards *un Futuro Bonito*

> "Bueno, pues, yo siempre les he dicho a mis hijos que a mí me interesa que estudien, que hagan una carrera. Porque nosotros como inmigrantes llegamos [en los Estados Unidos], trabajamos bastante en el campo, estamos en el sol, el frío, pues se sufre trabajando aquí. Entonces nosotros como papás emigrantes que hemos vivido este tipo de trabajo, nosotros queremos que nuestros hijos tengan un mejor estudio y que tengan una carrera para que no pasen lo que nosotros pasamos."[2]
>
> _ Brenda Lizeth, mother at Central High School

The stories and educational dreams like the one echoed above are not isolated aspirations. Parents, like Brenda Lizeth, who are immigrant farmworkers revealed to me their yearning for *un futuro bonito*[3]. This vision encompasses professional careers for their children and grandchildren that depart from exploitative labor conditions, offering instead a trajectory towards greater self-determination and agency. In other words, they perceive postsecondary education as a pathway leading their children toward a brighter, more secure future, one that is void of the physical deterioration, hypersurveillance, and inclement weather conditions they have endured. The future-oriented thinking or proleptic politic (Cole, 1996) is informed by their lived realities as *campesinos*[4] cultivating and harvesting the lands in Solano, Washington.

These concerns or *inquietudes* of parents to secure a brighter future for their children through postsecondary education are legitimate issues given that their children have often not been provided the opportunity to make this a reality. According to the U.S. Census Bureau

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[2] Well, I have always told my children that I am interested in them studying and pursuing a career. As immigrants, we arrived [in the United States] and worked hard in the fields, enduring the sun and cold, so we suffered working here. As immigrant parents who have lived this type of work, we want our children to have a better education and pursue a career so that they do not go through what we went through.

[3] In Spanish the term translates to "beautiful future", encapsulating the concept of wellbeing.

[4] farmworkers

(2022), only 20.6% of Latinx over the age of 25 have earned a postsecondary degree compared to 37.9% of the general population. This disparity is not a statistical anomaly but a reflection of underlying injustices that persist within and across educational systems. More concretely, access to postsecondary education for Black, Indigenous, Students of Color and other minoritized students has historically and continuously been inequitable. Given the realities of racism, settler-colonialism, anti-Blackness, and nativism, among other systems of oppression, schools as social organizations have often reproduced dominant dynamics (Bourdieu,1986; Grande, 2015).

While successful college completion is influenced by factors that originate long before students enter higher education, high schools play a pivotal role in shaping their postsecondary trajectories (Fazekas & Warren, 2010). Accelerated college preparatory programs—in the context of this study includes dual credit and advanced placement courses—are integral in this process. These programs prepare students for the rigors of college-level work and specialized career training, as defined in greater detail later in this chapter. Endorsed by federal and state governments as a means of increasing postsecondary access and preparation, these accelerated programs offer high school students an invaluable opportunity. By engaging in college-level coursework and hands-on training, students not only face academic and real-world challenges but also have the potential to earn postsecondary credentials (Chajewski et al., 2011; Hoffman, 2005; James, Butterfield, Jones, & Mokuria, 2017; Karp & Hughes, 2008; Kolluri, 2018). Research broadly indicates that participation in these programs increases students' likelihood of enrolling in college and completing a degree (Ackerman et al., 2013; Klopfenstein, 2010; Long, Iatarola, & Conger, 2008).

However, Latinx and other minoritized students are disproportionately underrepresented in college preparatory programs, revealing deep-rooted systemic barriers to access (Hooper &

Harrington, 2022). Paralleling statistics found by the U.S. Census Bureau, a national study conducted by the Education Trust (2020) found that while Latinx students constitute nearly a quarter of the high school demographic, they represent only 21% of students enrolled in AP courses (Patrick et al., 2020). Research demonstrates not only the structural injustices but also the day-to-day processes that perpetuate these disparities. That is, schools serving predominantly Students of Color with limited economic resources tend to offer fewer AP courses (Kolluri, 2018), and even in schools where such courses are available, tracking mechanisms frequently deny Black and Latinx students from these opportunities (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Patrick et al., 2020).

In response to these disparities, schools have embarked on a range of interventions aimed at creating more equitable access to accelerated college preparatory programs (Athanases et al., 2016; Flores & Gomez, 2011; Marinucci, 2013). Some of these strategies include cultivating a multicultural college-going identity and widening participation via open-enrollment policies. In rural areas with limited economic resources, schools have begun to introduce and promote state-funded online advanced placement courses that are offered at no cost to students (LeBeau et al., 2020). Partnerships between community colleges and high schools have also emerged as a strategy, with efforts to proactively reach out to Black and Latinx students and communities, informing them about dual enrollment opportunities, and providing support for their participation (Mehl et al., 2020).

Yet these measures have left a critical gap unaddressed—the role of families, particularly those most impacted by inequitable practices (Taylor et al., 2022). School-wide decisions are often made without leveraging Latinx (im)migrant[5] families as agentic changemakers (Auerbach,

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[5] I adopt the term "(im)migrant" from López (2001), using it to encompass both "immigrant" and "migrant" experiences, especially within communities working in the agricultural sector. The use of "(im)migrant" recognizes the multifaceted and intersectional nature of these experiences, reflecting the complexities of migration patterns,

2004; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016), whose expertise and collective knowledge could significantly inform equity-driven changes in dual credit and advanced placement courses. Therefore, addressing access to these accelerated college preparatory programs becomes an urgent necessity for families and youth who have been confronted with historical and ongoing educational injustices.

To that end, I use a qualitative research design anchored in a Chicana feminist epistemology to understand how Central High School, as a racialized organization, distributes resources about dual credit and advanced placement opportunities, and how Mexican (im)migrant families perceive and interact with these institutional practices. Data collection included individual and group pláticas with parents, informal interviews with staff members, observations, and document analysis. Supplemental data were drawn from a larger pilot study conducted in partnership with Pacific STEMworks and Central High School, which included course-taking and outcomes data, staff and student surveys, and student empathy interviews. In analyzing this data, I utilize the frameworks of Racialized Organizations and LatCrit to understand both the school's role in resource distribution and the experiences and perceptions of (im)migrant parents as they navigate these institutional processes.

To situate this study, the remainder of Chapter 1 will cover the following topics. First, it will examine existing research on racialized college preparation and the role of Latinx (im)migrant families. Second, it will outline the purpose of the study, highlighting its contributions to the empirical and theoretical understanding of dual credit and family engagement. Next, the research questions will be articulated, focusing on the organizational dynamics and family perceptions within educational settings. Then, an overview of the research

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legal statuses, cultural identities, and labor conditions. It critically challenges binary categories and allows for a more nuanced understanding of the lived realities that do not fit neatly into the traditional dichotomy of migrant versus immigrant.

approach will be provided, summarizing the theoretical framework and methodology guiding the study. Lastly, the organization and structure of the upcoming chapters will be described.

Contextualizing Research on Racialized College Preparation and the Role of Latinx Parents

This section begins by establishing the importance of postsecondary education. It then explores the role of dual credit and Advanced Placement programs in facilitating college success, noting their increasing popularity but also the underrepresentation of Latinx and other marginalized students in these programs. It also delves into how racialized school practices and biases contribute to this inequity, impacting both students and their families. Finally, it underscores the need for research that centers the experiences and insights of nondominant communities to understand and address barriers to dual credit access, ultimately working towards a more equitable educational system.

Significance of Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is vital in today's rapidly evolving global landscape, offering a gateway to a wide range of essential opportunities. According to Carnevale, Strohl, Ridley, & Gulish (2018), two out of three jobs today require a postsecondary certificate or degree. This is even more true for high-demand fields such as healthcare and technology that necessitate specialized knowledge and skills often gained through postsecondary education (DeZarn, Ilic-Godfrey, & Krutsch, 2023). The shift towards higher education is not only reflected in the job market but also in the economic and non-economic benefits it affords. College graduates, for instance, see a marked economic advantage, with bachelor's degree holders earning an average of $40,500 more, or 86% higher, than their counterparts with only a high school diploma (Edelson, 2022). In addition to the tangible financial gains, postsecondary education confers a range of non-economic advantages. It instills pivotal life skills like critical thinking, effective communication, problem-solving, and adaptability (Tsui, 2002). On a societal level, the impact is even broader. Communities with higher levels of educational attainment often report lower crime rates, improved health outcomes, and elevated civic engagement levels[6] (Trostel, 2017).

The significance of postsecondary education for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families extends beyond the benefits cited above. It carries deeply personal and political implications, particularly given the historical marginalization and ongoing sociocultural injustices faced by these communities (Araujo, 2012; Espinoza, 2008; Scribner & Fernández, 2017). Immigrant families describe higher education as a liberatory means for their children to reach their life goals (Araujo, 2012; Gutierrez, 2016). For some, this means changing the migrant history that "perpetuates intergenerational cycles of economic insecurity" (Delgado & Becker, 2018, p. 339) and shielding the next generation from arduous realities characterized by "hyper-exploitative forms of wage labor" (Espinoza, 2008, p. 19). For others, a postsecondary education serves as a means for Latinx futurities that challenges racism and nativism. Amid the sustained criminalization of immigrants, particularly those from Latin America, exacerbated by the policies of the 45th President of the United States, (im)migrant parents see their children's education as a tool for cultivating powerful community change and dismantling dehumanizing discourses (Scribner & Fernández, 2017; Tavares, 2019). By pursuing higher education, Latinx students from (im)migrant communities are not just seeking individual advancement; they are crafting compelling counternarratives, challenging oppressive systems, and embodying the collective resilience, aspiration, and hopes of their communities.

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[6] In highlighting the benefits of postsecondary education, particularly those metrics that align with securing dominant societal and cultural capital like higher income and enhanced civic engagement, I do not mean to imply that nondominant communities are absent of cultural knowledge and repertories that are not valuable without higher education.

The Impact of Dual Credit Policies on College Persistence and Completion

A critical ingredient for achieving these collective dreams and completing a postsecondary education lies in early academic preparation (Adelman, 2006; Flowers, 2008). The groundwork laid during high school plays a pivotal role in shaping a student's trajectory toward college completion. A body of research has shown the significance of comprehensive academic preparation during high school in facilitating better outcomes in college (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Take, for example, the robust correlation between standardized test scores and college persistence. Students who score in the highest quartile on the SAT or ACT are 28% more likely to continue in a 4-year college than their peers in the lowest quartile. Beyond test scores, the rigor of a student's high school preparation is a powerful predictor of college success. That is, youth who have been exposed to challenging coursework in their formative years tend to outperform their peers in college, earning higher GPAs, navigating more directly through their college years, and ultimately achieving increased graduation rates (Ackerman et al., 2013; D'Amico et al., 2013; Klopfenstein, 2010; Long, Iatarola, & Conger, 2009; Patterson & Ewing, 2013).

Recently, the role of high school preparation as a component of postsecondary completion has come to the forefront of educational research, practice, and policy (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Chajewski et al., 2011; Hoffman, 2005; James, Butterfield, Jones, & Mokuria, 2017; Mattern, Marini, & Shaw, 2013; Miller et al., 2017; Morgan, Zakhem, & Cooper; 2018; Struhl & Vargas, 2012). While the predominant rationale around college preparation is influenced by economic motives, recent shifts in national discourse highlight the potential of accelerated college preparatory programs to redress educational systemic inequities faced by minoritized students. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education identified dual credit as a promising strategy, especially beneficial for nondominant students, including learners from rural areas and low-income households. Similarly, the College Board's 2014 annual report marked a significant shift in the AP programs' purpose, advocating for equitable access to their rigor and benefits for all youth, regardless of social or economic background. The theory of action behind these accelerated college preparatory programs is that students are provided structural and experiential college preparatory resources that support their transition from high school to postsecondary education, leading to increased college persistence and completion (Conley, 2010).

In tandem with this heightened focus, dual credit and advanced placement programs have experienced a surge in popularity across the United States over the past two decades, gaining traction as a means of reforming postsecondary education (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Field, 2021; Garcia, Li, & Norris, 2020; Jacobson, 2020; Kolluri, 2018). One factor driving their popularity is that these programs allow high school students to enroll in college-level courses and earn both high school and college credits simultaneously. This dual enrollment provides students with a head start on postsecondary education while still fulfilling high school graduation requirements, enabling them to experience the rigors of college coursework and transition more smoothly into higher education (Karp et al., 2007; Klopfenstein, 2010; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Struhl & Vargas, 2012; Warne, 2017).

National-level data indicate the growth of these college preparatory programs. Dual credit programs are now available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, making them the most common type of college-level coursework for high school students (Jamieson, Duncombe, Bloomquist, Mann, & Keily, 2022). Approximately 88% of high schools offer dual credit opportunities, and about one-third of U.S. high school students are enrolled in college courses (Rhine, 2022). Participation in AP courses has also seen a significant rise, with over 1.2 million high school students enrolled in AP courses in 2019, a 57% rise from a decade ago (Jacobson, 2020). The number of high schools offering AP courses has expanded from 17,374 in 2009 to 22,678 in 2019. Additionally, the policy landscape is evolving to support these trends: 31 states now have uniform policies for awarding college credit to students who score a 3 or higher on AP exams, up from just 14 states in 2014 (Jacobson, 2020).

State-level data further demonstrate the growing traction of these programs. In Washington State, the number of students completing at least one accelerated college preparatory course soared in the last decade from 144,178 in 2010 to 210,491 in 2021. This represents a significant jump in participation, growing from 48.9% of total enrollment in grades 9-12 in 2010 to 58.5% in 2021 (Mahoney & McClain, 2021). This increase in enrollment includes both dual credit and advanced placement coursework. In Washington, the term "dual credit" encompasses both exam-based college preparatory courses and those granting credit upon course completion, such as AP and International Baccalaureate programs. Given these trends, accelerated college preparatory programs are increasingly heralded as a panacea for bridging the divide between high school and postsecondary.

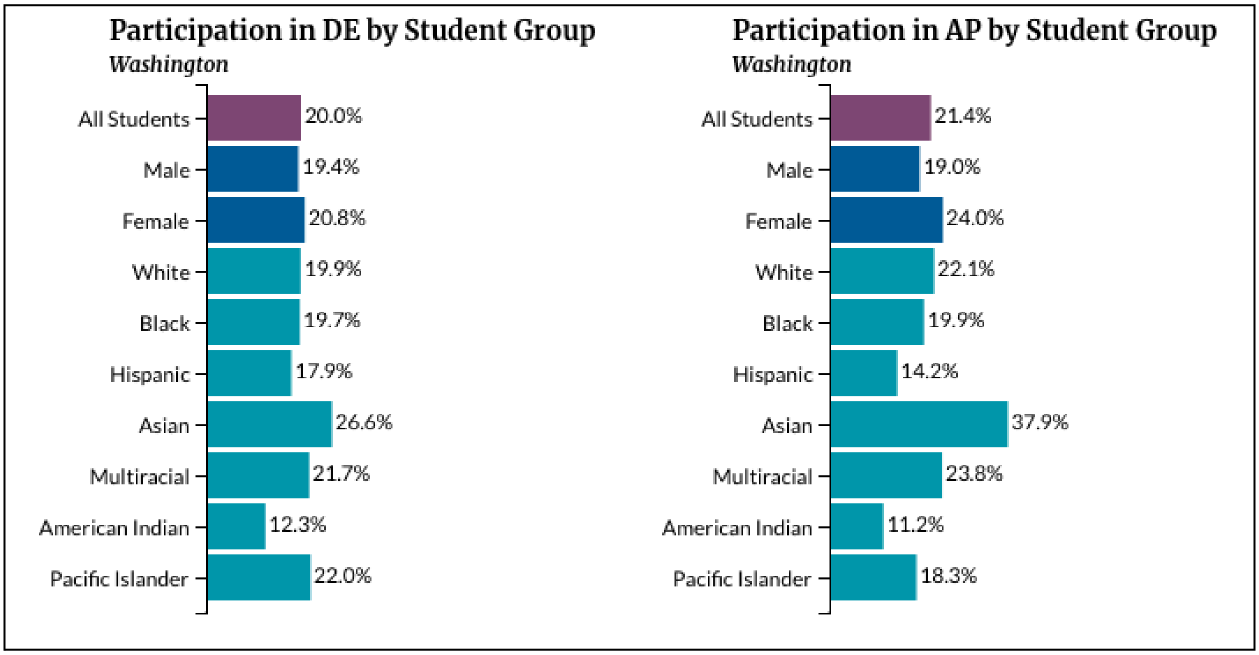
Underrepresentation of Latinx and other Nondominant Students in Dual Credit Programs

Yet, even as these programs proliferate and are nationally embraced as a viable solution for postsecondary completion, these programs go untapped for high school learners who have been historically disenfranchised within educational structures (Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021). Research reveals that dual enrollment opportunities tend to be more limited in schools predominantly serving lower-income communities and Communities of Color (Kolluri, 2018; Spencer & Maldonado, 2021; Xu, Solanki, & Fink, 2021). More remarkably, even when such programs are ostensibly available, students from these same communities participate at lower rates, signaling a form of racialized, linguistic, and socioeconomic tracking (Oakes, 1990; Patrick et al., 2020; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004).

Compared to their high school enrollments nationally, Latinx students, as well as Black, Indigenous youth, students with disabilities, and emergent multilingual learners are underrepresented in accelerated college preparatory programs (Fink, 2021). In the state of Washington, for instance, Latinx students, alongside Native/Indigenous learners, are the most underrepresented student demographic in dual enrollment and AP participation (see Figure 1). While 26.6% of Asian American students and 19.9% of white students enrolled in dual credit programs, only 17.9% of Latinx students accessed dual credit programs in the academic year 2017-2018. The disparity is even more pronounced in AP coursework, with only 14.2% Latinx participation compared to 37.9% for Asian American students and 22.1% for white students.

Figure 1

Percent of Students Completing a DE and AP Course by Gender and Race



Note. The data referenced pertains to the academic school year 2017-2018 and was sourced from the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (Fink, 2021).

Racialized School Practices Impacting Dual Credit Access for Latinx Youth and (Im)migrant Families

Research on academic tracking demonstrates that Latinx youth, and by extension their families, are often excluded from accessing college preparatory programs, highlighting the decisive role schools play in this process (Anderson, 2023; Oakes, 1990; Patrick et al., 2020; Palencia, 2020; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). These studies illustrate how schools sustain hierarchical racism through racial and linguistic ideologies that push Latinx students away from dual credit courses and postsecondary preparation (Callahan, 2005; Irizarry, 2021; Ochoa, 2013; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). For instance, Ochoa's 2013 ethnographic case study shows that teachers assumed Latinx students are less intelligent and less academically motivated than their Asian American counterparts, leading to their placement in average classes outside the AP program, regardless of their grades. Conversely, Asian American students find that their identities serve as social capital within the school, resulting in their tracking into AP/honors programs.

Across linguistic lines, studies show that monoglossic ideologies from educators impact their perceptions of Latinx immigrant students' abilities (Núñez, 2014). A longitudinal mixed-methods study by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) revealed that numerous teachers viewed Latinx immigrant students as being academically inferior. Another study found that Latinx emergent multilingual learners were often perceived as lacking the language proficiency or academic skills necessary for success in AP courses (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). This perception led to lower teacher expectations and fewer recommendations for these students to enroll in advanced coursework. Núñez and Gildersleeve's study (2016) showed that Latinx youth from farmworker families were not recommended for college preparatory programs due to deficit views about their English language competencies. Overall, these studies demonstrate the adverse effects of narrow linguistic ideologies on Latinx (im)migrant students' college preparatory opportunities.

These racial and linguistic beliefs are not restricted to students; they often envelop their families as well, especially those from (im)migrant communities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; López, 2001; Olivos, 2006; Valdès, 1996; Valencia, 2011; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Families are perceived as disinterested or disengaged from their children's education, a bias predicated on reductive assumptions concerning their socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). This framing locates inequities within the culture or repertoires of families rather than in organizational barriers that create inequitable access to educational resources (Auerbach, 2007; Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Olivos, 2006; Valdès, 1996).

Research suggests that the belief that parents are disinterested is exacerbated by the notion that legitimate access to information about accelerated college preparatory programs and postsecondary education processes is limited to participation in school-sanctioned activities (Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011; Welton & Martinez, 2014). These school involvement practices are racially coded, aligning with the expectations and lived realities of white, affluent families (Cooper, 2010; Perez Carreón et al., 2005; Valencia & Black, 2002). Activities such as attending Open House events or informational sessions about postsecondary education are typically designed with an organizational bias toward white norms, evident in the types of resources, information shared, and communication methods used (Cooper, 2009; Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). These practices may not resonate with or be accessible to Mexican (im)migrant families. Consequently, if Mexican (im)migrant parents do not engage in these specific practices, they risk being excluded from college preparation information and being perceived as disinterested in their children's education.

The way Mexican (im)migrant parents interpret and navigate these white normative school practices is undervalued within educational organizations (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; Olivos, 2006). Research on the systematic exclusion of Latinx parents by schools suggests that these parents have little influence on shaping dual credit access (Auerbach, 2012; Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013). Immigrant families are rarely seen as agentic knowers and doers within these racialized organizations (Doucet, 2011; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Mapp & Bergman, 2021), leading to the omission of their experiential wisdom that could highlight racial and linguistic inequities in dual credit access and formulate strategies for improvement. Therefore, schools play a critical role in shaping family-school dynamics, distributing organizational resources, and determining which voices are prioritized and heard.

For accelerated college preparatory programs to truly serve as a promising strategy towards increased postsecondary access and preparation, the field must engage in research to uncover ways to expand access with the insights of critical partners: nondominant communities. By weaving an understanding of school practices with the experiences and insights of Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families, my study seeks to illuminate organizational barriers to dual credit access and offer nuanced perspectives on educational disparities. These collective insights can catalyze transformative solutions and actions, paving the way for a more just educational system.

Purpose

More research is needed to understand how the racialized interactions between schools and families shape inequitable access to college preparatory opportunities. This study explores the racial and linguistic organizational dynamics at Central High School that affect the distribution of dual credit information and its implications for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families. It examines how these families experience, interpret, and respond to institutional practices related to dual credit information. Additionally, it investigates how Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families navigate these inequities and proposes strategies to improve equity in accessing college preparatory courses and resources. This research makes key contributions to both the empirical and theoretical understanding of these issues.

My first set of empirical contributions is concerning the role of nondominant families in *both* dual credit and family engagement scholarship. I contribute to the dual credit literature, which has not explored the role of parents and families in the context of access to dual credit programs (Taylor et al., 2022). While research has begun to unpack the practices through which white parents assert agency over their children's placement into dual credit courses, highlighting the considerable social and cultural power white parents exert in schools (Diamond & Lewis, 2022; Lewis-McCoy, 2020; Lyken-Segosebe & Hinz, 2015), there remains an absence of research that addresses how Families of Color navigate the same information landscape or how they understand its implications. My research fills this gap by examining how families perceive the processes and implications of dual credit program access.

The family engagement literature has not examined how Latinx (im)migrant families shape school practices toward dual credit opportunities (Kiyama et al., 2015). Despite a burgeoning body of research recognizing the cultural expertise and leadership of Latinx (im)migrants in creating K-12 school changes in policy, practices, and school-family relationships (Alvarado, 2022; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2020; Oliva & Alemán, 2019; Rodela, 2016), there is a scarcity of studies that explore how their insights and knowledge can be leveraged to shape educational opportunities towards *higher education* (Kiyama et al., 2015). My work contributes to this area by exploring the role of Latinx (im)migrant families in shaping access to dual credit opportunities.

Lastly, my dissertation makes a theoretical contribution by using an organizational lens to examine how schools, as institutions, are racialized. By focusing on the meso-level, my research bridges the often-segregated domains of macro-level institutional frameworks and micro-level individual interactions. Previous studies have used macro-level lenses to examine systemic racial inequities in education, including in the context of dual credit programs (Rodriguez & McGuire, 2019). Similarly, micro-level theoretical frameworks have been used to explore individual experiences and interactions within racially inequitable school systems (Giani, Krawietz, & Whittaker, 2023). Building on previous studies, I use the Theory of Racialized Organizations to investigate how organizational factors at Central High School contribute to unequal access to dual credit resources and information. This approach sheds light on how organizational practices impact students and families who diverge from white normativity.

Research Questions

My dissertation study examines the organizational practices at Central High School, focusing particularly on its interactions with Latinx (im)migrant families. Through a critical lens, I explore the school dynamics and intersectional experiences that shape dual credit knowledge and access for these families. My research is guided by two primary questions and sub-question:

1. **How does Central High School, as a racialized organization, disseminate or withhold dual credit resources from Latinx (im)migrant families?** This question delves into organizational structures and practices, examining how they may facilitate or hinder the flow of educational information.
    a. **How do families experience and interpret organizational practices and ideologies that shape their access to dual credit resources?** This query explores the lived experiences of families as they navigate the institutional landscapes that control access to dual credit opportunities.
2. **What strategies do Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families propose to increase equity in access to dual credit opportunities?** This question explores the insight of families for expanding equitable access to dual credit opportunities.

Together, these questions create a rich framework for understanding the multifaceted relationship between Central High School and Latinx (im)migrant families, illuminating the interplay between organizational practices, family experiences, and alternative possibilities.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

I draw from multidisciplinary theories to examine the dynamics of racial and linguistic inequities in accessing dual credit information and resources at Central High School. Using a qualitative approach grounded in a critical race-gendered epistemology, I explore how organizational norms influence the distribution of resources.

Theoretical Frames

My framework integrates theories of Racialized Organizations and LatCrit to analyze inequitable school systems, anchored in the experiential truths of Mexican (im)migrant communities. These theories offer tools for interrogating organizational practices and locating the cultural knowledge of families as legitimate sources for constructing alternative practices. Together, they intersect to form *una teoría de cambio* in racialized educational organizations[7].

Racialized Organizations Theory

A Theory of Racialized Organizations (Ray, 2019) is used to analyze how Central High School's structures and practices are encoded with constructed notions of race that influence the distribution of dual credit and AP opportunities. This theory challenges the notion of race neutrality, asserting that organizations perpetuate racialized outcomes through routine practices and values aligned with racial hierarchies. Ray outlines four tenets of racialized organizations: (1) racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) Whiteness serves as a credential; and (4) the decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is racialized. This theoretical framework helped highlight how Central's organizational practices legitimized inequities in dual credit opportunities and diminished agency for families.

Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit)

Building on the Theory of Racialized Organizations, LatCrit in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) helps illuminate how the distribution of dual credit information in school organizations intersects with other forms of oppression, compounding inequitable access for Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families. This theoretical approach is grounded in five core principles: (1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality; (2) challenging dominant ideologies; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) valuing experiential knowledge; and (5) interdisciplinary perspectives. This framework highlights not only the intersections of racial dynamics in dual credit access but also the value of experiential knowledge to (re)shape and de-center normative practices.

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[7] A more detailed discussion of my framework is provided in Chapter 2.

Methodology

I use a qualitative research design positioned within a Chicana feminist epistemology to explore the organizational dynamics that influence the distribution dual credit access. Guided by this epistemological stance, the research builds on the subaltern knowledge and lived realities of Chicanx families as legitimate and crucial sources of understanding (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Data collection occurred from November 2021 to March 2022 using multiple methods: individual and group pláticas with parents to gather in-depth narratives about their experiences; informal interviews with school staff to understand institutional perspectives; staff meeting observations to glean underlying attitudes; and analysis of school documents to examine policies and practices. This primary data was supplemented with findings from a larger pilot study conducted in partnership with Pacific STEMworks and Central High School, which included course enrollment and outcomes data, surveys of staff and students, and in-depth empathy interviews with students. These methods allowed for a rich exploration of the organizational landscape in which families navigate and confront inequitable access.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter provided a contextual overview of the research problem, significance, contributions to existing literature, guiding questions, and introduced the theoretical framework and methodology. The second chapter offers an extensive review of existing literature in the fields of dual credit and family engagement, defining key terms, and explaining the conceptual framework that informs the study. The third chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, methodology, and demographic context of the study. The fourth chapter presents an analysis of the collected data, connecting empirical findings with the theoretical framework. Finally, the fifth chapter synthesizes the research findings, reflecting on their broader implications for educational theory and practice, assessing the limitations of the study, and suggesting directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Tejiendo una Teoría de Cambio: Racialized Organizations and LatCrit Theory

In this chapter, I contextualize my study within existing literature and outline the theoretical frames to analyze how schools, as racialized organizations, distribute information about accelerated college preparatory programs. I also examine the perceptions and interactions of Mexican (im)migrant families with these institutional practices. The first part of the chapter situates the study empirically, integrating the literatures on college preparatory coursework, racialized tracking, and family engagement. In the second part of the chapter, I elaborate on two theoretical frameworks: Racialized Organizations Theory (Ray, 2019) and Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). These perspectives illuminate the school's organizational role in perpetuating inequities, and emphasize the significance of weaving familial expertise as a solution to these challenges. Together, these multidisciplinary theories intersect to form *una teoría de cambio in racialized educational organizations* — a theoretical framework for analyzing and transforming inequitable school systems, anchored in the experiential truths of subaltern communities. Ultimately, I argue that understanding how schools as organizations perpetuate racialized disparities in access to college preparatory programs, particularly for Latinx communities in rural areas, is critical for creating equitable access with the agentic role of families.

College Preparatory Programs, Racialized Tracking, and the Exclusion of Latinx Families

Below, I review literature on dual enrollment and AP coursework, acknowledging both its role in preparing students for postsecondary education as well as its exclusionary practices, such as racialized tracking. I then discuss prior literature on family engagement to highlight the need for research that leverages the experiences of Latinx immigrant parents, which has been largely overlooked in the context of college preparatory coursework. To provide context for this review and the dissertation as a whole, I begin by briefly clarifying terminologies for the college preparatory coursework programs I examine in this study.

Clarifying Terms

Accelerated college preparatory courses are broadly categorized into two models: exam-based and completion-based programs. Exam-based programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP), follow a national curriculum and culminate in a standardized exam, offering college credit based on exam performance (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Cassidy et al., 2010). Conversely, completion-based programs, often referred to as dual enrollment or dual credit, award college credit based on performance throughout the course, involving collaboration between high schools and postsecondary institutions (Allen, 2010; Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Bragg & Kim, 2006). While the literature sometimes differentiates between the two models, this study uses "dual credit" as an umbrella term to denote both exam-based and completion-based programs, aligning with the Washington State research context (Birkeland, 2019).

Dual Credit Coursework: Enhancing College Opportunity or Reproducing Inequality?

Tracing the Goals of Dual Credit Coursework

Accelerated college preparation programs were initially created to prepare students for college, though their early objectives were not primarily focused on equity (Kolluri, 2018; Rivera, Kotok, & Ashby, 2019). However, more recently, these programs have begun refocusing their goals towards expanding access for all students, particularly those who have historically been excluded, with the ultimate aim of broadening access to postsecondary education.

For example, the AP program developed in the mid-20th century during the Cold War, a period marked by geopolitical tensions. At that time, U.S. policymakers identified a gap between secondary and higher education, viewing the inadequate preparation for college as a national security issue (College Board, 2020). In response, the AP program was established, fostering collaboration between secondary schools and colleges to create achievement exams. These exams were designed to provide bright and industrious students—predominantly from middle- and upper-income backgrounds—an advanced academic standing (Blackmer et al., 1952; Lichten, 2010; Nugent & Karnes, 2002; Schneider, 2009).

Over the following decades, the AP program has not only expanded but has undergone a significant transformation, transitioning from being a reserve for academic elites to broadening access for nondominant student groups, signaling a shift towards a more inclusive agenda. This change in direction is highlighted in the College Board's "The 10th AP Annual Report to the Nation" (2014), which states:

> The Advanced Placement Program—the collaborative community of AP teachers and students, states, districts, schools, colleges, and universities committed to the daily work of **developing college-level knowledge and skills** [*emphasis in original*]—has grown significantly in the past 10 years. This expansion is built on the deep conviction that all students who are academically prepared—no matter their location, background, or socioeconomic status—deserve the opportunity to access the rigor and benefits of AP. (p. 5) (as cited in Kolluri, 2018, p. 671)

This new vision for the AP program has not only gained wider acceptance in the educational community but has also received bipartisan political support, which played a role in the program's proliferation (Schneider, 2011). Starting in the 1990s, the federal government began to recognize the potential of the AP program in improving college readiness, particularly for students from marginalized communities. This acknowledgment led to significant financial support, such as subsidies for AP exam fees and a $25 million investment to introduce the AP program in schools primarily serving low-income students (Schneider, 2011). These initiatives were part of a strategic approach to level the academic playing field.

Similarly, developing alongside programs like Advanced Placement, dual enrollment (DE) was established to offer academically advanced students, typically from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, more rigorous academic experiences (Rivera, Kotok, & Ashby, 2019). Launched in the United States in the late 1970s, DE was designed to allow these students to engage in challenging, college-level coursework while still in high school. Many states responded by crafting policies that facilitated course-taking opportunities for these students at local community colleges (Rivera, Kotok, & Ashby, 2019). Minnesota is historically acknowledged for pioneering one of the first comprehensive statewide DE strategies, setting a precedent for others to follow (Boswell, 2001).

By the early 2010s, DE's inclusivity had expanded with courses becoming accessible to even younger students. A federal survey highlighted that by 2010-11, 40% of institutions had opened their doors to tenth graders, while a notable 25% allowed ninth graders to enroll (Field, 2021). Concurrently, as higher education costs escalated and disparities in graduation rates grew more evident, the purpose of expanding dual enrollment programs began to evolve. Policymakers reframed DE not just as an avenue for advanced coursework, but as a strategic means to make higher education more affordable and accessible for nondominant communities, including low-income and first-generation students (Karp, 2015). These principles now form the core of many modern DE initiatives, contrasting starkly with their historical counterparts.

In this new context, numerous rural states have adopted DE as a preferable alternative to honors or Advanced Placement courses, citing the benefit of guaranteed credits upon course completion, unlike the uncertainty of credit allocation based on test performance (Kryst, Kotok, & Hagedorn, 2018). In addition, various school districts, including those in urban and suburban areas, are leveraging DE to introduce economically disadvantaged and underrepresented students to a wider spectrum of postsecondary opportunities (Fink et al., 2023). On a national scale, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) further endorsed DE's equity role by authorizing grants for local educational agencies designed to bolster K-12 student success. These funds were earmarked not just for tuition and associated fees, but also extended to cover transportation and teacher professional development. The legislation illuminated the intentions to position DE not just as an academic program but as a component of a comprehensive strategy for bridging educational inequities.

Within the last two decades, dual credit programs have become increasingly popular in reforming postsecondary education in the United States (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Garcia, Li, & Norris, 2020; Kolluri, 2018). A driving force behind the popularity of DC is that these programs address several interrelated challenges in postsecondary education, including poor academic preparation, limited access to higher education, high costs, and low degree completion rates (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2008; Klopfenstein, 2010; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016; Warne, 2017). Hofmann (2012) argues that dual credit programs are situated in a “middle space” to improve pathways from high school to college. That is, dual credit programs create collaborative linkages between K-12 districts and postsecondary institutions to prepare students for college transition (Karp et al., 2007; Struhl & Vargas, 2012).

Generally, there are three models through which dual credit courses are offered: (a) college-level courses taught at the high school, (b) classes conducted at a college campus, and (c) courses delivered by college instructors through distance education (Anderson et al., 2021;

Harkins, 1998; Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013; Paek, Ponte, Sigel, Braun, & Powers, 2005). Students enrolled in dual credit courses can earn credits toward an academic degree or, in the case of the Career and Technical Education (formerly Tech Prep) program, training that may culminate in an industry-recognized credential (Zinth & Barnett, 2018). States have varying articulations for their dual credit policies (e.g., funding structures, student eligibility requirements) and considerations for the types of settings where certain DC courses are delivered (Adelman, 2006). Nonetheless, dual credit has risen as a popular reform strategy for expanding pathways to postsecondary enrollment and improving college completion.

Dual Credit as Enhancing Opportunity

Creating Pathways to Academic and Career Success. A substantial body of research indicates key advantages of dual credit programs, including easing the transition process to postsecondary education, better academic preparation, exposure to a rigorous curriculum, saving money and time in college, and increasing college retention and completion rates (Adelman, 2006, Chajewski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; D. Allen & Dadgar, 2012; D'Amico, Morgan, Robertson & Rivers, 2013; Dannenberg & Hyslop, 2019; Evans, 2019; Hoffman, 2005; Karp & Hughes, 2008; McKillip & Rawls, 2013; Patterson, Packman, & Kobrin, 2011; Struhl & Vargas, 2012; Torres, 2019). For example, a 2017 longitudinal study by Blankenberger, Lichtenberger, and Witt investigated the impact of dual credit on postsecondary attainment in Illinois. The study found that students who participated in dual credit programs were more likely to complete a postsecondary degree within seven years of high school graduation compared to their non-participating peers. The study observed the most significant positive effects on degree completion among students who began their postsecondary education at community colleges.

In another longitudinal research study by Ackerman, Kanfer, and Calderwood (2013), the researchers explored the impact of completing high school exam-based courses on college performance. Their analysis of Georgia Institute of Technology students revealed four significant findings: 1) Completing exam-based courses positively correlated with higher college grades and graduation rates, with variations depending on exam scores; 2) Students with more exam-based course credits often skipped lower-level college classes, opting for advanced courses, leading to earlier graduation and higher rates; 3) The average score on these exams was a strong indicator of post-high school academic success; 4) Gender differences were noted in the completion of these courses and their influence on college performance, particularly in STEM areas.

Other research, including a study by Evans (2019) using nationally representative data, highlighted additional economic benefits of dual credit programs. This study found that students who earned dual credit were more likely to complete their college degrees in a shorter time frame. Additionally, these students showed a higher propensity for pursuing double majors and enrolling in advanced math and laboratory science courses in college. The study also revealed a financial benefit: students who entered college with roughly 10 hours of exam-based credit typically had about $1,000 less in student debt. This debt reduction is often attributed to the advanced standing these students achieved in college due to their accumulated credits from dual credit programs.

Other studies, such as Lile, Ottusch, Jones, and Richards (2018) highlighted the nonacademic benefits of dual credit programs. Using a mixed-method approach, the researchers examined the experiences of students from rural high schools and a community college. Findings from their survey and interview data suggest that students in DC courses developed a deeper understanding of the college-student role, such as demystifying who attends college, honing academic skills (e.g., note taking), and learning about career and academic pathways after obtaining a postsecondary education (e.g., graduate school). Additionally, students reported that enrolling in DC courses helped them assume a college student identity. That is, they felt they “were part of the college, rather than part of the high school” (Lile, Ottusch, Jones, & Richards, 2018, p. 104).

Moreover, quantitative studies using perceptual data have explored how undergraduate students perceive their college readiness based on participation in exam-based and course-completion programs. Norris-Shu's 2018 research, involving a survey of 265 freshmen and sophomores at East Tennessee State University, aimed to understand their views on dual credit coursework. The study found students perceive both program types as beneficial for college success, particularly highlighting the quality of instruction and course rigor. However, there was a preference for course-completion programs like dual enrollment, cited for more consistent credit transfer and instructor quality. Students appreciated dual enrollment for not relying on a single test for credit, while others found exam-based courses more rigorous and in-depth. Overall, both types of coursework were viewed as advantageous for transitioning into college.

Creating Pathways for Minoritized Students. A strand of literature focuses on how dual credit programs open higher education doors for systemically excluded students. Studies by Bailey et al. (2002) and Garcia, Li, and Leong (2020) highlight dual credit's role in mitigating college access challenges in small, rural schools. These studies emphasize that partnerships between high schools and postsecondary institutions provide rural youth access to college coursework and resources absent in their schools. Additionally, An (2013) utilized national longitudinal data to explore dual credit's impact on reducing socioeconomic disparities in educational attainment, revealing that low-income students enrolled in dual credit courses had higher attainment rates compared to their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

Qualitative studies have delved into the experiences of minoritized high school students who accessed college readiness opportunities via dual credit. Drumright's (2021) study used narrative inquiry to focus on junior and senior high school students with limited access to economic resources, particularly those identifying as Latinx and Black, including those from first-generation and immigrant families. The study illuminated the critical role of teacher support in guiding students toward success in exam-based programs. It revealed that the encouragement and guidance of nurturing teachers were instrumental in motivating students to enroll in and excel in dual credit courses. The study showed that these nurturing teacher-student relationships extended beyond enrollment, with teachers providing detailed, constructive feedback, contributing to their academic development and readiness for postsecondary education.

In a similar vein, other qualitative studies such as Allen, Thompson, and Martinez-Cosio (2019) on Latinx youth in engineering programs find that school personnel support is pivotal in introducing dual credit programs. The research found that these students, mostly first-generation college-goers, learned about dual credit opportunities primarily from teachers, advisors, and counselors. The study also revealed that dual credit participation shaped students' aspirations for college and career paths, and it provided them with an understanding of the college environment. For instance, students became familiarized with the overall structure of college courses and how to interact with their college faculty members. Dual credit did not necessarily shorten their time to graduation but allowed for a more manageable course load and elective choices. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of aspirational capital in guiding students through their transition into college engineering programs.

Additionally, a case study by Duncheon (2020) on early high school colleges (ECHS) involving low-income, first-generation Latinx students demonstrated that dual credit courses played a significant role in the socialization of students to the demands of higher education. The study indicated that the academic and social preparation of students for college success was substantiated by three critical components: 1) extensive academic support systems; 2) exposure to actual college coursework; and 3) fostering a sense of independence and autonomy. Students benefited from both formal and informal academic support that helped them navigate college structures, including specialized programs and advising. Exposure to college-level classes taught by professors varying in content, pedagogy, and difficulty helped them acclimate to a more rigorous academic environment. Moreover, dual credit courses provided students with a sense of responsibility and self-reliance, reinforcing their identity as capable and autonomous individuals.

In summary, extensive research demonstrates that dual credit programs can help bridge the gap between high school and postsecondary education. This is especially valuable for students who have been historically and continuously excluded from accessing higher education. These programs provide benefits such as smoother transitions to college, enhanced academic preparation, exposure to challenging curriculums, and cost and time savings, among other advantages. However, despite policy shifts towards equity, the organizational implementation of these programs often displays racialized practices, leading to unequal access for minoritized students. The next section will delve deeper into this aspect, examining the academic tracking in dual credit programs.

Dual Credit as Replicating Inequality

Stratifying Access to College Preparation. In the U.S., the typical tracking system in education categorizes students into three distinct pathways based on criteria such as test scores, grade requirements, prerequisite courses, and teacher recommendations (Kelly, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 1990). This system also differentiates curriculum and instruction *vertically* (Sørensen, 1970), though not exclusively, by exposing "students to similar bodies of knowledge but at different paces, with different levels of rigor, or with differing degrees of social status" (Domina et. al, 2019, p 297). The first pathway is the high track, where students often encounter more qualified teachers and have the chance to enroll in dual credit courses, earning college credits in various subjects. The second pathway, the vocational track, focuses on basic education and steers students toward vocational careers rather than college preparation. The third, often referred to as the low track, typically involves less qualified teachers and coursework focused on rote memorization (Mayer, 2008; Oakes, 2005). Additionally, schools frequently use course title labels such as "honors," "advanced," "college prep," "technical," "business," or "general" to further distinguish these courses (Archbald, Glutting, & Qian, 2009). Despite these variations, there remains a clear hierarchical distinction among these different categories in terms of curriculum rigor and preparedness for postsecondary roles.

Research has shown that the first educational pathway, specifically participation in dual credit programs, offers substantial advantages. These programs provide advanced coursework that can enhance academic performance (Long, Conger, & Iatarola, 2012; Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2019) and increase college enrollment and completion rates (Ackerman et al., 2013; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Chajewski et al., 2011; Crabtree, Richardson, & Lewis, 2019). However, numerous studies have highlighted a significant issue: racialized tracking. This form of tracking has systematically restricted the access of nondominant students to these dual credit courses (Cantu, 2019; Kolluri, 2018; Oakes, 2005; Ochoa, 2013; Schneider, 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). The disparate enrollment is reflected in national data that reveal only 9.0% of

Black students and 21.0% of Latinx students participated in course-completion-based programs, even though they accounted for 15.0% and 27.0%, respectively, of public high school students in the 2020-21 school year (U.S Department of Education, 2023). The disparity extends to exam-based programs, particularly in STEM fields, where participation rates for Black and Latinx students were notably lower.

Scholarship on academic tracking identifies key factors contributing to the disparate participation in dual credit programs. These include the limited availability of dual credit courses in schools serving predominantly low-income, Black, and Latinx students, and unequal access for minoritized students in schools with a predominantly white student body (Friedman et al., 2011; Kolluri, 2018; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Oakes, 1990; Patrick et al., 2020; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Spencer & Maldonado, 2021; Xu, Solanki, & Fink, 2021; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). The latter point suggests that even when such programs are ostensibly available, organizational practices lead to racialized, linguistic, and socioeconomic tracking that perpetuates a cycle of educational disparity.

In their 2020 research for the Education Trust, Patrick, Socol, and Morgan examined inequities in credit-by-exam courses in U.S. public schools. The study revealed that Black and Latinx students are denied access to college preparatory courses, especially in racially diverse schools. It found that in schools where 10% to 50% of the student body consists of Black or Latinx students, there are significant disparities in providing access to advanced coursework. In these settings, Black and Latinx students have a lower likelihood of being enrolled in advanced courses compared to their peers. For example, in Maryland, Black and Latinx students are disproportionately underrepresented in exam-based courses. Of every 100 eligible Black or

Latinx students, only 61 Black and 67 Latinx students are enrolled in such courses (Patrick, Socol, & Morgan, 2020).

In a 2011 study by Friedman and colleagues, the researchers examined 12 dual credit "clusters" consisting of higher education institutions, local education agencies, and high schools. The study revealed that despite Latinx students constituting a near-majority of all high school students in Texas (46%) in 2010, they made up 40% of students enrolled in dual credit courses. In contrast, white students, who comprised only 35% of the student body, represented 46% of dual credit enrollees. Similarly, Black students, constituting 14% of the total student population, only made up 10% of dual credit participants in the same year. Additionally, the study noted that both Black and Latinx students, as well as students from lower-income backgrounds, were overrepresented in career or technical education DC courses compared to white and Asian American counterparts.

Echoing these findings, an in-depth report by the Hechinger Report (2020) on CTE nationwide enrollment data from 2017-2018 indicates that Black and Latinx students were overrepresented in lower-level CTE offerings, such as courses in hospitality and human services. In contrast, they were underrepresented in CTE courses related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). For example, in South Carolina, although Black and Latinx students constituted 43% of all CTE students, less than a third were enrolled in information technology courses. Furthermore, the report highlighted that white students were predominantly enrolled in CTE courses linked to fields leading to wage-sustaining careers such as technology, health care, and engineering.

Promoting Racial and Linguistic Hierarchies. The previous academic tracking literature illustrates the stratification and hierarchization of students into distinct pathways. This following strand of the literature reveals the underlying driving forces—racial and linguistic ideologies—behind these practices. One key way this tracking limits access to dual credit courses is through educator bias and inadequate communication with students and families (Patrick, Socol, & Morgan, 2020). Often, teachers and school counselors are tasked with recommending students for advanced curriculum programs. Their influence is significant even if they are not directly responsible for these recommendations. They may encourage certain students to pursue these advanced programs while dissuading others (Francis, Oliveira, & Dimmitt, 2019). This can lead to a systemic barrier for some students in accessing advanced educational opportunities.

In an oft-cited study by Lewis and Diamond (2015), the researchers show that minoritized students are relegated to lower-level courses because teachers and counselors are gatekeepers to accessing advanced courses. Drawing on qualitative data, they found that teachers in a well-funded suburban high school had differential expectations for white and nondominant students that led to disparate enrollment in credit-by-exam courses. Specifically, the lower academic expectations set for Black and Latinx students resulted in fewer of them being recommended for these advanced courses. Lewis and Diamond argue that these low expectations are byproducts of racial ideologies that position Black and Latinx students as less capable than their white peers.

Other studies demonstrate that for Latinx immigrant students and emergent multilingual learners, schools use English language proficiency levels to determine their placement in academic tracks (Agosto, 2023; Belcher & Hairston, 2019; Bjorklund, 2019; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). For instance, a case study by Belcher and Hairston (2019) at a suburban high school in Chicago found that although multilingual learners comprised

10% of the student body, less than 2% were enrolled in exam-based college preparatory courses. The assistant principal attributed this to teachers' low expectations due to students' developing English skills. Agosto's ethnographic study (2023) further revealed that even when Latinx multilingual learners are enrolled in such courses, the prevailing raciolinguistic ideologies among teachers lead to lowered academic expectations and reduced course rigor. Thereby, raciolinguistic ideologies not only disproportionately deny access to advanced coursework but also impact the expectations and educational experiences of these students once enrolled.

These racial and linguistic beliefs not only affect students but also extend to their families, resulting in differential treatment (Lareau, 2011; Lewis-McCoy, 2020; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Olivos, 2006; Tyson, 2011). This treatment can systematically exclude nondominant parents, as research suggests, potentially diminishing their influence on their children's participation in dual credit programs. Lewis and Diamond (2015) found that teachers responded differently to white middle-class parents compared to Black and Latinx families. They observed that white students were more frequently recommended for dual credit courses and received favorable grades, in part because teachers anticipated intervention from white parents. This dynamic, according to Lewis and Diamond, illustrates how whiteness operates as symbolic capital within the school system, influenced by the school's response to white parents.

Similarly, Olivos (2006) contends that white, affluent parents are often granted higher social and cultural capital by school staff, treated as equals or superiors. In contrast, low-income, bicultural parents are seen as inferior and face challenges when raising concerns. Olivos further argues that these interactions are influenced by a “hegemonic status” in schools, a dominant and silencing power dynamic upheld by societal norms. In other words, schools operate insidiously to maintain an organizational hierarchy, dictating varying interactions with families based on their socioeconomic and cultural status.

While there is limited understanding of how racial and linguistic dynamics influence the college preparatory information provided to Latinx (im)migrant parents, research indicates that these biases also affect the type and quality of information parents receive about dual credit programs (Auerbach, 2011; Gonzalez, Villalba, & Borders, 2015; Johnson, 2009; Martinez, Cortez, & Saenz, 2013). A study by Gonzalez, Villalba, and Borders (2015) on Latinx immigrant parents' experiences in assisting their children's postsecondary planning revealed some negative interactions with school staff. For example, one mother had to assert her knowledge of the school's course sequence to prevent her son from being placed in remedial courses, highlighting a perception among school staff that Latinx students are less likely to attend college. In most cases, Spanish-speaking Latinx parents depend on school personnel for guidance on information about college preparatory courses and opportunities (Martinez, Cortez, & Saenz, 2013). Yet, these families often perceive an unequal distribution of college-related information, influenced by factors like race, class, nativity, language, and academic status.

In conclusion, schools as organizations implement tracking systems that create barriers for minoritized students and families in accessing dual credit programs. These systems, rooted in racial and linguistic ideologies, lead to unequal access to high-level academic opportunities and information for nondominant families, especially those from Black and Latinx communities. Although research is burgeoning in exploring how these dynamics unfold at the organizational level, further studies are needed to understand the complex interplay of language, class, ethnicity, geography, and immigration status in relation to school practices that unequally distribute dual credit resources.

Moving Towards Equitable Access to Dual Credit

As research continues to identify inequitable access to dual credit programs along axes of race and ethnicity, school strategies have attempted to mitigate and disrupt further marginalization (Athanases, Achinstein, Curry, & Ogawa, 2016; Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021; Davis, Ford, Moore, & Floyd, 2020; Flores & Gomez, 2011; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015; Kryst, Kotok, & Hagedorn, 2018; Lagunas, 2023; Marinucci, 2013; Moore & Slate, 2008; Patrick, Socol, & Morgan, 2020; Powers, 2017; Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2019; Zinth, 2014). For instance, school districts are focusing on developing a pipeline of students who are ready for rigorous coursework from an early age. One effective strategy being implemented is vertical alignment (Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021). This approach involves mapping the skills and competencies needed at higher grade levels and using this insight to inform curriculum development and standards, starting as early as kindergarten.

Others are adopting an "open door" policy to broaden access to credit-by-exam college preparatory courses (Marinucci, 2013; Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2019). This approach eliminates gatekeeping mechanisms such as teacher recommendations, allowing highly motivated students, particularly those from Black and Latinx backgrounds, to participate in these rigorous courses. To support this policy, schools are creating a robust curricular infrastructure that equips students with the skills needed for success in college-level classes. This includes initiatives like summer programs designed to prepare students who have not previously taken dual credit courses, ensuring a supportive environment for diverse learners (Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2019).

Schools are cultivating a multicultural college-going identity, setting high expectations and providing rigorous learning with extensive support for nondominant students (Athanases et al., 2016). Moreover, they are implementing tailored modes of recruitment and retention for college preparatory programs. For example, a case study by Lagunas (2023) highlights how high school counselors and AP Spanish teachers in high-poverty Arizona schools successfully engaged more Latinx students in AP Spanish classes through targeted marketing. These strategies involved showcasing the advantages of the AP Spanish course, rewarding student involvement, and using testimonials from current students to emphasize the cultural, identity, and bilingual assets of the course.

Yet other schools have formed comprehensive partnerships with state-level educational organizations to improve access to dual credit courses (Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021). For example, Mass Insight Education & Research in Boston has partnered with Massachusetts school districts for over 15 years. They focus on increasing student participation in dual credit courses by providing instructional resources, teacher professional development, and student support, all through an equity-focused approach. Similarly, Equal Opportunity Schools in Seattle works with districts to expand access and enrollment in exam-based college preparatory courses for low-income students and Students of Color (Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021).

In rural schools, which often lack the diverse course offerings, extracurricular activities, and resources of urban and suburban schools, state policies are providing financial support (Kryst, Kotok, & Hagedorn, 2018). This funding helps cover tuition and other expenses for low-income students in dual credit courses. Rural schools have also used this funding to broaden access to college preparatory courses by adopting virtual course options, allowing students to participate in advanced placement coursework remotely (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015). This approach has helped bridge the resource gap and offered rural students more equitable dual credit opportunities.

However, as schools continue to make organizational strides in creating just dual credit opportunities, nondominant families, whose children are most impacted by inequitable practices, are missing from these conversations about school improvements (Taylor et al., 2022). Therefore, more research is needed that considers how families' experiences shape understandings of dual credit programs as well as offer insights for expanding access.

Family Engagement in Education

This section examines family engagement in education, focusing on Latinx immigrant families. I explore the benefits of family participation on academic performance, the limitations of traditional parent involvement models, and highlight research advocating for inclusive approaches that value diverse cultural perspectives. Finally, I discuss the transformative potential of Latinx immigrant families in educational organizations.

Parent Engagement: Shaping Student Outcomes and Postsecondary Readiness

Parent engagement and positive school-family relationships have long been considered key determinants for improved student learning (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2007). Empirical studies show that families' participation in their children's learning, regardless of income or background, correlates with typical markers of improved student academic performance, higher grades and test scores, lower pushout[8] rates, and higher postsecondary education rates (Ceballo, Maurizi, Suarez, & Aretakis, 2014; Ceja, 2006; Durand, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2005; McNeal, 2015). Moreover, family engagement plays a crucial role in preparing students for college and supporting their transition to postsecondary education (Auerbach, 2007; Kiyama et al., 2015). Key factors contributing to this include the level of parental support and encouragement, the highest educational attainment of parents, and parents' beliefs in their children's academic potential. These elements are closely linked to a higher likelihood of students applying to and enrolling in college, as well as performing well in college readiness assessments (Asamsama et al., 2016; Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001; Perna & Titus, 2005).

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[8] I intentionally use the term "pushout" as opposed to "dropout" to indicate that students do not voluntarily decide to leave school and not graduate. Rather, it is the result of systemic issues - institutional practices, scripts, and overall school systems - that actively push students out of the educational environment (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011).

Apart from the positive benefits on student outcomes and college readiness, research demonstrates that school districts that value families as “essential partners” can significantly improve school programs (Epstein, 2018; Mediratta & McAlister, 2009; Sanders, 2008). Studies have shown that collaborations involving parents, through initiatives like outreach programs, are effective in increasing students' knowledge about college and in developing networks and resources for college application and enrollment processes (Auerbach, 2004; Bryan, Griffin, Henry, & Gilfillan, 2019; Gandara, 2002; Gonzalez, 2017; Millitello, Schweid, & Carey, 2011). Moreover, the success of these collaborations, geared towards college-readiness, is largely dependent on establishing trust, a component for meaningful family-school relationships (Bryan et al., 2019). Parent engagement and strong school-family collaborations are therefore integral to creating high-quality learning opportunities and driving educational improvement.

What Really Counts as “Engagement” in Schools

Despite well-documented benefits, family *engagement* strategies to improve student success have primarily defaulted to a deficit model of parent *involvement*. That is, schools adhere to a traditional model of involvement that has focused on school-based activities without attending to dynamics of race, class, immigration and other intersections that shape how families engage in their children’s learning (Olivos, 2006; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). According to Pérez Carreon, Drake, and Calabrese-Barton (2005), parent *involvement* is conceptualized in “what parents do”' and how those practices closely align with the expectations of schools that are centered on white, middle-class behaviors.

This approach mirrors and is influenced by Epstein’s (1995) oft-cited model[9] of family engagement, which categorizes students’ influences into three spheres: home, school, and community. The model suggests that overlapping these spheres results in better support for students. However, it fails to consider the power dynamics within these interactions, often resulting in the home and community spheres being subordinated to school practices (Ishimaru, 2019). This framework, furthermore, outlines six key elements for effective parent involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration. Even the more seemingly inclusive categories of Epstein's model—decision making and collaboration—which intend to share power with parents and communities, are still structured to support pre-existing school norms (Schutz, 2006). Consequently, this framework often plays out in ways that fulfill individualistic expectations of educators, such as volunteering in the classroom, attending parent-teacher conferences, and participating in the parent-teacher association.

Such a prescriptive list of what “counts” as engagement—and blueprint for school organizations—implicitly devalues families who do not meet these standards (Delgado- Gaitan, 2004; Faircloth, 2011; López, 2001). This conventional approach perpetuates a blame narrative for disparities in education, especially among racial and other minoritized communities. Consequently, these family-school dynamics have generated racialized implications for the roles nondominant families assume in schools and how they are viewed within educational systems (Auerbach, 2012; Cooper, Riehl, & Hasan, 2010).

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[9] Although Epstein's family engagement model has been critiqued in recent times for not addressing power dynamics, it is important to recognize its historical significance. It introduced the concept of synergies among home, community, and school, emphasizing the critical role of parents in education.

Reinforcing White Normativity in College Readiness. Traditional models of parent involvement, which legitimize active participation in school activities, often imply that families who do not conform to these norms are disinterested in their children's college readiness and higher education transition. Activities like attending Open House events or informational sessions about higher education are typically designed with a bias towards white cultural norms. This is reflected in the types of resources provided, the information shared, and the methods of communication (Cooper, 2010; Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). Such approaches may not align with the needs or be accessible to nondominant families. However, this organizational script often becomes the gatekeeper for accessing information about accelerated college preparatory programs and understanding the college preparation process, reinforcing participation in school-sanctioned activities as the *only* legitimate form of engagement (Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011; Welton & Martinez, 2014).

Educational institutions regularly approach the engagement of nondominant families in college preparation by attempting to compensate for perceived family "deficiencies," (Welton & Martinez, 2014) without addressing the racialized dynamics at play. That is, asymmetrical power in family-school relationships are sustained through seemingly innocuous practices. For instance, schools might translate newsletters into Spanish, provide interpreters for parent-teacher conferences, or offer child care during school events to include Latinx (im)migrant families in the college preparation process (Gonzalez, 2020; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Kiyama & Harper, 2015; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015). While these organizational tactics seem to be more responsive in supporting parents' institutional knowledge about college readiness, they still operate under a deficit lens. Such families are regarded as subjects who must be assimilated into understanding and following organizational norms to access information and resources, rather than as allies from whom educators can learn and (re)negotiate school routines that are more culturally sustainable.

These efforts, moreover, place emphasis on “fixing” families rather than addressing inequities found within school structures (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernández, 2013). That is, these rules and logics of involvement frame students and their families as culturally deficient; focusing on families' unfamiliarity with postsecondary education systems, lack of English proficiency for immigrant families and youth, lack of supportive peer networks, adverse neighborhood conditions, and financial constraints in comparison to their white counterparts (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Gonzalez, 2020; Fruchter et al., 2012; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Nichols & White, 2001; Myers & Myers, 2015; Noguera, 2003; Rodriguez, 2016; Stewart et al., 2007; Zirkel, 2004). In other words, educational inequities–such as underpreparedness for college– are located within the cultural capital of nondominant families, therefore the solution lies in changing or “fixing” their behaviors to align with organizational expectations.

Subsequently, a “deserving parent” supports their child's education in ways that align with educators' expectations, such as assisting with college applications, completing FAFSA forms, and discussing postsecondary options. These parents actively participate in school-organized events, seek to understand the school's expectations, and generally do not challenge the school's agenda or the authority of its educators. Their adherence to these racialized norms for engagement grants them legitimacy and access to information and resources for college preparation—they play by the rules. Conversely, parents who do not conform to these organizational norms are often labeled as “undeserving”—sometimes pejoratively referred to as the “lazy” parent—terms disproportionately applied to Latinx, immigrant, or refugee families.

They are presumed to be indifferent to their children's education, a judgment based on their absence from school events or lack of engagement with school communications (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalez, 2012; Lopez, 2001; Olivos, 2006; Valencia & Black, 2002). Such a dichotomy between “deserving” and “undeserving” parents perpetuates a racial hierarchy within the educational system, marginalizing those who do not or cannot conform to the prescribed model of involvement.

Not only do these taken-for-granted rules of engagement dictate the distribution of information and resources regarding college preparation but also reinforce racialized roles for nondominant families within schools. Commonly, school power hierarchies situate administrators and educators at the top of organizational decision-making and improvement, while families and youth remain at the bottom (Cooper, 2010). This dynamic relegates parents to the margins with limited power to make decisions about their children’s learning or capacity to influence school agendas, thereby implying that they have no expertise in education. As a result, families from communities like Latinx immigrants and other nondominant groups may find their agency diminished in shaping their children's access to dual credit programs within school systems.

At the practical level, this peripheral role that families are assigned manifests in school leaders making decisions about college preparation without weaving the cultural and linguistic insights of diverse families into efforts for equity-driven change (Auerbach, 2012; Cooper et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2022). Despite progress in schools towards equitable access to dual credit programs, such as implementing “open door” policies or nurturing a multicultural college-going identity (Athanases et al., 2016; Marinucci, 2013; Roegman, Allen, & Hatch, 2019), these initiatives are developed without leveraging the perspectives of Latinx (im)migrant communities and other nondominant families. Schools have yet to fully embrace how school practices for distributing resources on dual credit and college readiness can be (re)negotiated with the experiential knowledge of families to create community-specific solutions and systemic reforms.

This top-down approach in family-school dynamics overlooks how nondominant parents interpret these practices that reify white normativity (Cooper et al., 2010; Ishimaru, 2019). Moreover, these dynamics do not position parents agentic knowers for leading the conversation and decision-making process regarding implementation of dual credit programs. Even when school districts gather data on course enrollment and access to dual credit, the interpretation and subsequent actions based on this data are typically conducted internally (as well as cross-institutionally), excluding students and families from the conversation (Knapp, Glennie, Charles, 2016; Stokdyk, Johnson, & Grandone, 2020). Consequently, what counts as an appropriate role for nondominant families within conventional school-family relations and assimilative rules operate under white normative standards.

Rewriting the Rules of Involvement: Cultural Repertoires in Education

Latinx immigrant families and migrant farmworker elders possess a cultural knowledge base and a constellation of repertories that are often delegitimize within school organizations (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; López, 2001; Nava & Lava, 2016). While school staff may possess taken-for-granted knowledge about the policies and resources found in educational systems, Latinx immigrant families possess cultural knowledge that shape their youth's learning. In a seminal study by López (2001), the researcher documented the engagement practices of a Mexican (im)migrant family in encouraging their children to pursue higher education aspirations. To reinforce high educational expectations, youth were exposed to arduous agriculture labor to learn the value of their education. The parents in this study felt that working offered a life lesson by exposing them to the realities of migrant life marked by poverty, hardship, and constant mobility. Despite limited formal interaction with the school, these parents viewed themselves as deeply involved in their children's educational journey. Similarly, Pérez Carreon et al. (2005) highlight in their study the ways low-income Latinx immigrant parents use specific forms of cultural capital to author personal spaces of engagement. For instance, Pablo, one of the parents in the study, uses a teaching-through-example approach to engage in his sons' schooling that "expanded beyond formal school matters to daily life situations" (p. 483). Pablo used his "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) to teach his sons about mechanics and growing vegetables. These studies demonstrate that engagement can take many forms beyond conventional school activities and outside school spaces.

Latinx immigrant communities often engage in their children's education in ways that are not always visible to educators, occurring within intersecting spaces of home and community. For instance, in an ethnographic study of Latinx immigrant parents at college planning meetings revealed that parents offer "apoyo" (support) and "consejos" (advice) rooted in cultural wisdom, primarily at home and in Spanish, making it less visible to educators (Auerbach, 2006). Additionally, Latinx immigrant families pass down cultural knowledge and worldviews through consejos, serving as a tool to instill resilience (Alfaro et al., 2014; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Dyce, 2013). Tavares (2019) found that Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families provided generational consejos of resiliency to their children. For instance, one of the mothers in the study, Sarita, described that her own father was a farmworker in Mexico and would convey to her and her siblings "Yo quiero que ustedes me superen a mí" (*I want you to surpass me*) which is a sociocultural wisdom that she now transmits to her own daughters; she wants them to have better socioeconomic opportunities than she or her parents had as farmworkers through postsecondary education.

In a similar vein, research shows that Latinx immigrant parents are instrumental in providing aspirational support to their youth, impacting their determination to succeed in higher education (Dyce, 2013; Easley, Bianco, & Leach, 2012; Guzmán, Kouyoumdjian, Medrano, & Bernal, 2021; Mireles-Rios et al., 2021; Perez & Taylor, 2016). For example, in their research on Mexican heritage students, Easley et al. (2012) explored the concept of 'ganas'—a term embodying the drive and motivation for academic success. They found that 'ganas' is closely tied to a family-centered value system, where educational achievement is seen as a way to honor parents for their sacrifices, such as enduring trauma, navigating immigration challenges, and striving for survival in the U.S. This sense of gratitude and respect towards parents is a key motivator. Similarly, Perez and Taylor (2016) highlight that often Latinx students from immigrant families appreciate their parents' non-traditional strategies to nurture educational aspirations. These experiences range from involving children in work to impart the importance of financial responsibility, to sharing narratives of personal educational limitations as a source of inspiration for academic success.

In short, Latinx (im)migrant families navigate a complex social landscape shaped by ethnicity, migration, language, and class, which informs their engagement in education. Within these complexities, they demonstrate resilience and encourage their children to thrive in school organizations. Traditional involvement approaches, however, reify assimilative white, middle-class norms, veiling the community wealth found within families. Building from Latinx (im)migrant families' lived experiences and repertoires becomes imperative as it provides a more expansive view of engagement beyond the definition of schools. This suggests that adopting culturally and linguistically relevant practices in schools is necessary for creating equitable school systems. Such organizational practices can legitimize all forms of engagement and, simultaneously, develop inclusive policies and norms for distribution of resources.

Latinx (Im)migrant Families as Agentic Knowers and Doers

While there is a dearth of studies focusing specifically on how Latinx (im)migrant families actively contribute to improving dual credit opportunities in schools, critical scholarship exists that illuminates how these families are transforming their engagement within school organizations (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; Durán, Carruba-Rogel, & Solis, 2020; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2020; Oliva & Alemán, 2019; Rodela, 2016). By drawing on their cultural knowledge and asserting their agency, these families are transforming their interactions, roles, and actions in elementary education. This body of work suggests that schools should not only validate this cultural repertoire but also weave it into their practices. Doing so can lead to possibilities for addressing race-based disparities, such as fewer learning opportunities and resources for nondominant communities.

Within this scholarship, studies have focused on how Latinx immigrant families, particularly Latina mothers, enact their form of agency to advocate for their children's learning at the intersections of racialized, cultural, anti-immigrant, and sociolinguistic marginalization (Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2020; Oliva & Alemán, 2019; Rodela, 2016; Vélez, 2016). For instance, Fernández and Paredes Scribner (2018) explored how a parent-led group, the Latinx Parent Organization (LPO), composed of Latina immigrant parents, advocated for change in an urban elementary school. This initiative emerged in response to anti-immigration policies that were adversely affecting their local Latinx immigrant community and their children's academic performance. In contrast to the school's approach, the LPO recognized the impact of deportation threats on family wellbeing. They proactively and strategically disseminated information to other parents by inviting guest speakers, including immigration lawyers, law enforcement officials, union organizers, social service advocates, and others who support immigrant communities. Thereby, these agentic parents carved and nurtured a space within the traditional school system where their collective cultural wealth was both recognized and valued. Similarly, Oliva and Alemán (2019) shed light on the actions of seven Latina immigrant mothers who drew on their own lived experiences to introduce humanizing school discipline and teacher quality policies at their children's elementary school. These policies were centered around principles of dignity, respect, and care.

Other strands of literature have focused on the collective expertise between Latinx immigrant families and school actors to create curriculum, policies, and programming that is reflective of the priorities and interests of these communities (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017; Kuttner et al., 2022). For instance, Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017), expand on a broader research initiative to illustrate how parents, educators, and administrators from two elementary schools collaborated to create a new parent-education curriculum intended to enhance parental support for student learning. This initiative, which involved nine culturally and linguistically diverse parents including Latina immigrants, school staff, and researchers, sought to replace an existing proprietary curriculum. The group worked together to identify priorities, develop lesson activities, and refine the curriculum through piloting. This process marked a shift from traditional, limited parental engagement to engaging families in an agentic role. More recently, in a participatory design research study conducted by Kuttner et al. (2022), the focus was on redesigning a School Community Council (SCC) with families and school educators. This initiative primarily involved Latinx immigrant and Spanish-speaking parents. The group co-designed multiple products, including a comic book that parents could use to recruit other parents to SCCs and educate families about their rights. Through this collaboration, the group was able to cultivate relational trust, which changed unilateral relationships between families and educators. The authors emphasize that the process of collaboration with families and educators involved a collective act of critical imagination that leveraged cultural and institutional knowledge to redesign the SCC.

This growing body of research points to nondominant families as agentic knowers and doers who can play a critical role in shaping new school policies, practices, and norms. However, most of the research in this area has focused on urban elementary school settings. While this scholarship is valuable, there is a gap in our understanding of how Latinx (im)migrant families from rural communities interpret high school practices for engagement in dual credit opportunities and, subsequently, how their repertoires and expertise can shape equitable access to dual credit resources and knowledge.

To summarize, the reviewed literatures highlight ongoing systemic inequities in accessing dual credit programs and the exclusion of nondominant families from contributing to these opportunities. By bridging dual credit and family engagement literatures in the context of college preparation, my study will support efforts to maximize equity in dual credit through more inclusive parent engagement. Additionally, this study will provide an organizational perspective on how factors like language, class, ethnicity, geography, and immigration status interplay with school practices in distributing dual credit resources unevenly.

A Multidisciplinary Framework of Educational Justice

To understand how organizational dynamics influence dual credit opportunities, I use the Theory of Racialized Organizations and LatCrit theory as foundational frameworks. These lenses help analyze the exclusionary practices of the high school that limit dual credit information for Mexican (im)migrant farmworker parents. These theories also help understand how families make sense of and navigate the institutional practices enacted by the school. Furthermore, they provide *aperturas* (Ishimaru & Bang, 2016) or generative openings, offering both theoretical and lived insights into these dynamics.

Ray’s (2019) Theory of Racialized Organizations illustrates how schools, often seen as neutral, are inherently racialized in their structure, practices, and outcomes. LatCrit theory complements this by highlighting the multifaceted forms of oppression within educational organizations that affect Latinx immigrant families. By considering the complex interplay of ethnicity, migration, language, and socioeconomic status, LatCrit theory provides a nuanced understanding of how these factors shape the experiences and engagement of Latinx families within educational institutions. It also emphasizes the importance of families' experiential knowledge in shaping school agendas to improve access to dual credit opportunities.

Theory of Racialized Organizations

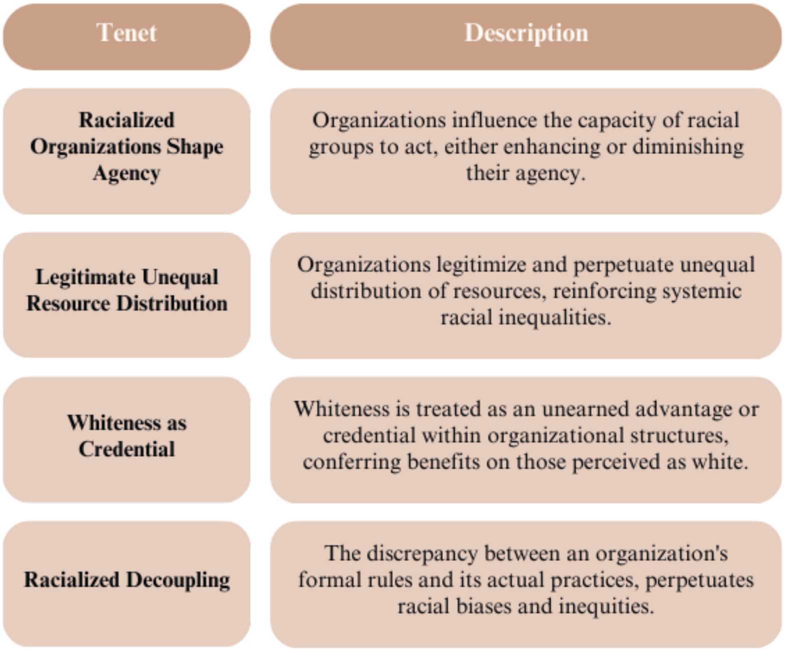
Ray's (2019) Theory of Racialized Organizations pushes the boundaries of traditional organizational analysis by highlighting how organizations— often presumed neutral or color-evasive — perpetuate racism through their structures, practices, and outcomes. By zeroing in on the meso-level, which bridges the gap between macro-level institutional constructs (e.g., the racial state and legislation) and micro-level individual interactions (e.g., prejudice, racial attitudes), this framework implicates the role of these organizations in shaping racial dynamics. This intermediate sphere is a crux, where racial nuances are not reflections of larger societal structures or individual prejudices but are actively constructed, negotiated, and perpetuated.

Historical conceptualizations in organizational theories (Aldrich, 1999; Perrow, 2002; Stinchcombe, 1965; Weber, 1978) tended to view racial disparities as anomalies or as outcomes of individual prejudices, treating organizations as neutral terrains where race played a marginal role. Such an approach rendered invisible the embedded structural and systemic inequities that are foundational to these organizations. Ray, through their conceptualization, foregrounds race as a central organizing principle, offering a comprehensive understanding of how organizations are not just situated in a racialized society but are active participants in the production and reproduction of racial meanings.

While Ray's theory was not entirely centered on schools (only used as an example of a meso-level organization), it becomes useful for educational analysis, especially when examining exclusionary school routines. Schools, as organizations, are not isolated from the broader sociopolitical context, rather, they are microcosms of larger racial dynamics. A case in point is the unequal access to dual credit information and coursework—a practice that disproportionately affects Mexican (im)migrant parents and their children (Ochoa, 2013; Palomin, 2020; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Through the Theory of Racialized Organizations, I unpack how Central High School and other school organizations enact racial schemas that generate and legitimize inequitable access. In the following section, I describe the four tenets (see Table 1) within a Theory of Racialized Organizations.

Table 1

Four Tenets of Racialized Organizations



Tenet	Description
Racialized Organizations Shape Agency	Organizations influence the capacity of racial groups to act, either enhancing or diminishing their agency.
Legitimate Unequal Resource Distribution	Organizations legitimize and perpetuate unequal distribution of resources, reinforcing systemic racial inequalities.
Whiteness as Credential	Whiteness is treated as an unearned advantage or credential within organizational structures, conferring benefits on those perceived as white.
Racialized Decoupling	The discrepancy between an organization's formal rules and its actual practices, perpetuates racial biases and inequities.

Racialized Organizations Shape Agency

Ray's first tenet suggests that organizations enhance the agency of dominant racial groups at the expense of racial subordinate groups, illustrating how systemic structures either enhance or undermine the autonomy of different racial groups within these institutions. Situating "agency" within the broader sociological discourse, it is viewed as an individual's (or group's) capability to act, make decisions, and exert influence within structures that might constrain or facilitate these actions (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Ray posits that these very structures are inherently racialized, therefore, the latitude of agency an individual exercises is inextricably linked to their racial positioning within the organization's hierarchy. Given the historical trajectory of the U.S., characterized by its white-settler state formation and principles of white supremacy (Crenshaw, 1988; Mills, 2019; Wolfe, 2006), those at the organizational apex hold inequitable resources, status, and power over others based on their proximity to whiteness. Such an arrangement not only ensures the continued racial stratification of organizations but also that the agency of those in dominant positions dictates the trajectory for the entire collective, driven by exclusionary logics.

Applying this conceptualization of how agency is shaped and renegotiated within organizations offers insight into how educational institutions can either enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups. For instance, power asymmetries and race-based assumptions influence teacher-student interactions in ways that impact students' sense of agency. Deficit-based views that stereotype Black and Latinx students as disruptive or academically inferior create an uphill battle to access advanced-level classes, even if their performance mirrors or surpasses those of their white and Asian American peers (Stewart, García, & Petersen, 2021). Here, the privilege of whiteness or its close proximity equates to an *enhanced* array of resources and opportunities, such as movement to accelerated college preparatory coursework. In sharp contrast, bodies racialized as Black or their proximity to Blackness diminishes educational opportunities.

Similarly, the distribution of dual credit information — or lack thereof — to nondominant families, such as Latinx (im)migrant communities, directly affects their agency. By adhering to racialized institutional scripts (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017), rooted in white normativity, schools not only regulate resource allocation but also confer legitimacy upon which families are deemed worthy of accessing these resources. Therefore, non-white parents who may not align with traditional, institutionally prescribed models of parental “involvement” (e.g., assisting with college applications, attending information sessions, and discussing postsecondary options) find themselves excluded from resources. Such schema diminishes their agency in current academic decision-making and, by extension, subsequent postsecondary educational decisions.

Furthermore, the construct of school-based *racialized pathways* serves as a mechanism for differential expectations that result in diminished agency of racial subaltern groups (Owens, 2022; Ray, 2019). For instance, schools that are majority-minority and economically disadvantaged, meaning they serve predominantly Black and Brown communities with limited economic resources, tend to have detrimental expectations about the "types of students" their organization serves and the futures for which the students are bound (Ferguson, 2020; Shedd, 2015). In other words, these schools are often not perceived as "college-bound," rather they are typecast as remedial and their students more likely to "dropout" or become entangled with the criminal justice system (Owens, 2022). This racialized anticipation of outcomes, therefore, impacts how students are perceived and treated. Subsequently, this environment can restrict their capacity to pursue alternatives beyond the constrained futures imagined for them.

Racialized Organizations Legitimate the Unequal Distribution of Resources

The second tenet argues that organizations play a role in justifying why resources are distributed unequally among different racial groups. As such, the imprints of racial segregation, historically perpetuated through conventions, policies, and law (Kendi, 2016; Massey & Denton, 2019), continue to resonate in modern organizational structures. While some organizations today, like schools, present themselves as integrated, processes often replicate larger societal segregation that legitimize the unequal distribution of resources and power (Ray, 2019). In schools, for example, the use of ostensibly neutral institutional criteria such as test scores, teacher recommendations, grade requirements, and prerequisite courses acts as a mechanism to segregate students into distinct academic tracks, resulting in unequal access to opportunities and resources (Domina, Penner, & Penner, 2017; Kelly, 2007; Oakes & Lipton, 1990). Whereas dual credit courses provide students with rigorous and highly academically demanding instruction (college-level), non-dual credit courses focus on simpler instructional content and may proceed at a slower pace.

Not only do these accelerated college preparatory courses distribute unequal resources, but they also yield unequal outcomes, such as better academic preparation, saving money and time in postsecondary education, and increasing college retention and completion rates (Adelman, 2006; Chajewski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; Evans, 2019; Karp & Hughes, 2008; Torres, 2019). However, seemingly neutral practices, such as teacher recommendations for certain dual credit courses, are intertwined with racial and linguistic ideologies that disproportionately impact access for Black and Latinx students and their families (Belcher & Hairston, 2019; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Ochoa, 2013). Consequently, the way unequal distribution of resources is legitimized is bound up with the subtle, and often taken-for-granted, routines within organizations that are racialized (Ray, 2019).

Whiteness is a Credential

Ray's third tenet argues that "whiteness" operates as a powerful credential within organizations, facilitating access to resources, legitimizing hierarchical structures, and expanding white agency. According to this lens (and that of other critical race theories), "whiteness" transcends individual racial identity. Instead, it serves as a sociopolitical construct anchored in unequal power dynamics, premised on the subjugation of Black bodies and intertwined with settler colonialism (Cornell, 1990; Lopez, 2006; Omi & Winant, 2014; Wolfe, 2006). Cheryl Harris's groundbreaking work in 1993 conceptualizes whiteness as a form of property, a tangible asset linked to freedom, personal sovereignty, and exclusive rights. This "merger of white identity and property" is constructed against the simultaneous backdrop of racial slavery and settler colonialism as a structure of Indigenous erasure (Harris, 1993, p. 1,721; Leroy, 2016). Thus, being "white" became intrinsically tied to wealth, labor distribution, and freedom – foundational elements for establishing complex organizations.

While the meaning of race or racialization is fluid across time and space, the settled expectation remains the same: white-controlled institutions reify the property interest in whiteness "in contemporary form" (Harris, 1993, p. 1,762). That is, whiteness embodies a power dynamic rooted in white supremacy that assigns value to human bodies and defines structural advantages for those marked as white (Jung, 2015; Lewis, 2004). As agents of whiteness in contemporary times, schools hold the authority to define values, behaviors, and norms, further encoding racial hierarchies within their structures. So even if these organizations are not a white majority based on their demography, they still assert whiteness through operational routines predicated on white-sustaining logics (Diamond, 2018; Morris, 2006; Ray 2019). The spectrum of ways that schools protect and enact whiteness ranges from centering settler pedagogies (Grande & Anderson, 2017) to a preference for specific knowledge systems (Bang et al., 2012; Conrad, 2022), behaviors, or linguistic resources and registers (Von Esch, Motha, & Kubota, 2020).

As such, white parents and their children are bestowed organizational advantages as they are shielded and reinforced by their racial status (Lareau, 2011; Lewis-McCoy, 2020; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Olivos, 2006; Tyson, 2011). Whiteness, in these contexts, operates as a form of symbolic capital, an unearned asset that confers benefits on those identified as white within the organizational frameworks of schools. This racial privilege is evident in the differential treatment of parents based on race. Lewis & Diamond (2015) illustrate how "squeaky wheel" parents, a code often used for white parents, are perceived and treated more favorably compared to Black and Latinx parents. When white parents advocate for their children, their actions are typically framed as constructive engagement with their children's education, whereas similar advocacy from Black and Latinx parents is often dismissed as problematic or disruptive (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Additionally, the preferential treatment of white parents extends to tangible academic benefits for their children. For example, the persistent presence and advocacy of these "squeaky wheel" parents in school settings can result in their children receiving more favorable grades and other unearned advantages (Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

Racialized Decoupling

The final tenet exposes a contradiction between an organization's formal policies and their operational realities that sustain racial inequities (Ray, 2019). Schools often espouse a commitment to preparing all students for postsecondary education, a stance reflected in their mission statements and aligned with broader state and national educational discourse (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Garcia, Li, & Norris, 2020; Kolluri, 2018). However, many schools decouple these avowed commitments from their actual practices, leaving schemas of sub- and superordination intact (Ray, 2019). For instance, while dual credit opportunities are theoretically available to all, racial subaltern students have a lower chance of participating in and benefiting from them compared to their racial dominant counterparts. The formal criteria for these programs such as high grades, test scores, student or parent requests, and teacher recommendations (Kelly 2007; Kelly and Price 2011), seemingly objective, mask subjective factors that produce within-school differences in DC access. These criteria overlook the unequal access to resources like test preparation that Students of Color often face. Additionally, they fail to account for the implicit biases in educator recommendations, which skew against these students (Patrick, Socol, & Morgan, 2020). As a result, the implementation of dual credit placement policies deviates from their original goal of inclusivity, thereby continuing to reinforce existing racial hierarchies.

Concluding Thoughts: Theory of Racialized Organizations. In conclusion, the Theory of Racialized Organizations is powerful for examining the racial underpinnings of school structures, practices, and outcomes, challenging the often assumed neutrality or color-evasive approach of schools. Specifically, the theory's first tenet, highlighting how racialized organizations shape individual agency, and the second tenet, addressing the legitimization of unequal distribution of resources, are useful in my research for analyzing how the institutional practices for accessing dual credit knowledge can undermine the agency of Latinx (im)migrant families in supporting their youth's postsecondary preparation, while also perpetuating the unequal allocation of DC resources. These insights focus on the racialization processes woven into schooling practices. While the Theory of Racialized Organizations provides valuable insights into the racialized nature of schooling, LatCrit theory offers a more nuanced lens. It captures the everyday experiences of Latinx immigrant families across multiple axes of identity, including ethnicity, language, and labor, among others. LatCrit theory also recognizes and values the experiential knowledge and cultural strengths within Latinx communities, positioning them as critical contributors to educational change.

Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit)

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) is a theoretical extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that addresses issues of ethnicity, migration, immigration, language, gender, sexuality, and class, especially as they pertain to Latinx groups (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). In the field of education, LatCrit is used to reveal how schools as “white-controlled” and dominant monoglossic institutions reproduce formal and informal raciolinguistic policies, norms, practices, and scripts (Cisneros, 2019; Dolsa, 2020; Durand, 2011; Huber, 2010; Vega, 2020; Villenas, 2001). This theoretical approach is grounded in five key tenets[10] (see Figure 2) that forms the core of LatCrit research in education. These principles include:

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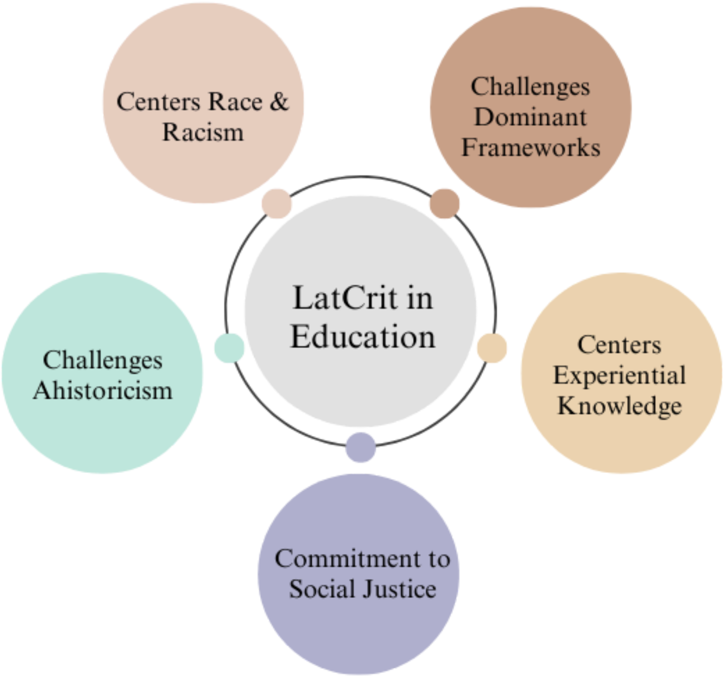
[10] LatCrit draws upon the same foundational tenets as those articulated in Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

1. **The Centrality of Race and Racism and Their Intersectionality**: This tenet places race and racism at the forefront of educational discourse, acknowledging how they interweave with other forms of oppression to impact the Latinx experience.
2. **Challenging Dominant Ideologies**: LatCrit emphasizes the need to question and confront the dominant narratives and beliefs that uphold systemic inequalities within educational systems.
3. **Commitment to Social Justice**: Central to LatCrit is the pursuit of social justice, intending to dismantle racial disparities towards equity in education.
4. **Valuing Experiential Knowledge**: This principle highlights the importance of recognizing and weaving the lived experiences of subaltern communities as valid and critical sources of knowledge.
5. **Interdisciplinary Perspectives**: This tenet advocates for a multifaceted approach, drawing on insights from various disciplines to deepen the understanding of racial dynamics in schooling.

Figure 2

Five Tenets of LatCrit Theory


Centers Race & Racism
Challenges Dominant Frameworks
LatCrit in Education
Challenges Ahistoricism
Centers Experiential Knowledge
Commitment to Social Justice

Centering Race and Racism and their Intersections with Other Forms Subordination

LatCrit in education starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic and deeply settled into our social institutions (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). However, these racial dynamics manifesting within school systems do not occur along a single categorical axis, rather racism intersects with other forms of domination based on gender, class, culture, language, and immigration status to compound oppression at multiple, simultaneous levels (Crenshaw, 1990). Within the context of dual credit literature, LatCrit reveals how organizational practices like tracking not only reify racial disparities but also exacerbate inequities based on language and immigration status. For example, research has shown that raciolinguistic ideologies among educators towards Latinx immigrant students and emergent multilingual learners result in students being placed in lower academic tracks (Belcher & Hairston, 2019; Bjorklund, 2019; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). This is evident in how English language proficiency is used as a metric to exclude them from rigorous courses, such as college preparatory programs (Belcher & Hairston, 2019; Bjorklund, 2019).

Furthermore, LatCrit highlights the structural barriers impacting youth who are undocumented in accessing higher education opportunities through dual credit courses (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Laurin, 2013). In many states, these students are ineligible for in-state tuition rates or state-funded financial aid (Abrego, 2006), key for affording dual credit classes. Consequently, even students who manage to enroll in such courses through community colleges are overladen with out-of-state tuition fees, due to policies that tie financial support to U.S. citizenship (Gándara & Contreras, 2010). LatCrit brings to focus the complex and intersecting forms of subordination that permeate educational policies and practices, thereby shaping the experiences of Latinx (im)migrant communities within and across school organizations.

Challenging Dominant Frameworks

This second tenet interrogates educational claims made toward objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Solórzano and Yosso (2001), for example, argue that institutional myths about meritocracy and neutrality conceal “the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups” (p. 597). In school organizations, the meritocracy ideology is illustrated when teachers and administrators uphold beliefs that lower-income Latinx immigrant parents and their children are at the center of school failure “due to their lack of effort and cultural capital (i.e., their ‘inability’ to speak English) as well as the parents’ lack of formal education and white-collar skills” (Olivos, 2006, p. 34). LatCrit, in contrast, offers a counternarrative to these deficit views, questioning and redefining the conventional understanding of parental involvement. It critiques the standardized norms that dictate the "appropriate" roles of Latinx families in school-family relationships, highlighting how these norms often fail to respect or weave the cultural and linguistic assets of these communities.

The Commitment to Social Justice

Since power and politics are at the center of all teaching and learning, a LatCrit framework is committed to an anti-hierarchical agenda and racial justice project. Specifically, LatCrit theorists envision the empowerment of Latinx families and other subaltern communities by dismantling systems of racialization, nationalism, linguicism, capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and other forms of systematic oppression in the social world and educational landscape (Cisneros, 2019; Davila & Bradley, 2010; Durand, 2011; Salinas, et al., 2016; Vega, 2020; Villenas, 2001). While educational institutions operate within powered paradigms to reproduce racial iniquities, LatCrit recognizes that "multiple layers of oppression and discrimination are met with multiple forms of resistance" (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 314). In this vein, the stories and perspectives of Latinx immigrant families are tools for identifying and addressing educational injustices, where their voices become central to cultivating transformative solutions.

Centering Experiential Knowledge

LatCrit centers the experiential knowledge of families and Communities of Color which are often not figured prominently in conversations about racial equity in education. In fact, these experiences are "legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 473). This experiential knowledge can be viewed as a strength that is drawn through counterstories, storytelling, family histories, *cuentos*, and *dichos* to illuminate experiences that are "uniquely individual while at the same time both collective and connected" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Dillard, 2000, p. 676; Valdés, 1996). For instance, Latinx immigrant parents transmit familial knowledge and memory through *consejos* that are shaped by generations of lived experiences (Tavares, 2019). Furthermore, embedded in these life histories are forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and nondominant cultural capital (Carter, 2005) that teach worldviews and dispositions toward life.

The Transdisciplinary Perspective

A LatCrit framework engages in transdisciplinary dialogue and discourse to analyze racial dynamics in view of historically accumulated forms of power. That is, LatCrit in education extends beyond disciplinary boundaries—drawing from history, sociology, law, gender and women's studies, and other fields (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001)—to contextualize historical and lived inequities. This transdisciplinary perspective offers a nuanced understanding of matrices of oppression (Collins, 2002) shaping the educational lives of families. Additionally, situating ongoing educational inequities within a larger racialized historical landscape disrupts a "post-racial" imaginary (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In this way, the power dynamics often observed in schools, where school administration assumes leadership roles and Latinx immigrant families are relegated to subordinate positions, are understood not as isolated phenomena but as patterns rooted in a deeper historical context (Donato, 2007; García, 2018).

Concluding Thoughts: LatCrit Theory. In conclusion, a LatCrit framework recognizes that structural racism and other intersecting forms of oppression manifest within educational systems to shape the experiences families have with schools. Unlike the conventional view of schools as apolitical value-free spaces of learning, LatCrit exposes how interactions with these institutions are marked by historical and ongoing dynamics of racism that have material consequences for families. The tenet of "Centering Race and Racism and their Intersections with

Other Forms of Subordination" sheds light on how the distribution of dual credit information in schools is not only racialized but also intricately linked to other forms of oppression to compound inequitable access for Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families. The tenet "Centering Experiential Knowledge" locates the lived experiences of these families as legitimate sources for understanding organizational inequities and as a starting point for constructing alternative, more equitable possibilities.

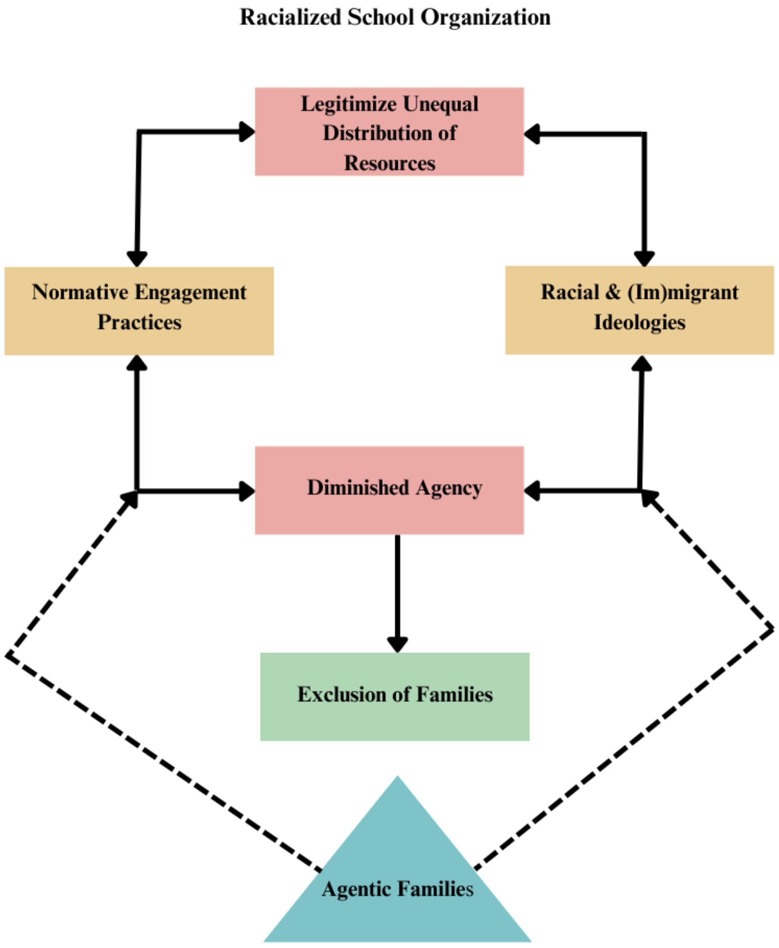
Tejiendo una Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations

My conceptual framework weaves together these two theories to examine the racialized structures and practices living and breathing within schools that shape access to dual credit knowledge (see Figure 3). Central to this framework is the understanding, as posited by the Theory of Racialized Organizations, that schools operationalize norms and practices that are predicated on logics of whiteness to legitimize certain knowledge, voices, and actions over others. These norms are upheld by institutional actors such as teachers, principals, and district school leaders who then reify an unequal allocation and access to dual credit information if minoritized families and students, such as Latinx (im)migrant farmworker communities, do not ascribe to these taken-for-granted practices. Whether communities align with or diverge from these settled norms, directly influences their collective and individual agency.

A LatCrit lens enriches this understanding by highlighting that racial dynamics are not monolithic or linear. Racism is complex, intersecting with other axes of oppression, including gender, labor, language, and immigration status to compound and multiply inequities. In this way, racialized school routines are shaped by other multiple forces of power. And so how families react to these practices is undergirded by layered power structures they negotiate daily, including racialized migrant labor systems. Yet, amid these power dynamics and within these racialized organizations, Latinx families and students bring with them a reservoir of experiential wisdom, repertoires, and resilience. These repertoires offer insights and strategies that can challenge and reshape restrictive norms and deficit views towards more equitable access to dual credit resources and knowledge.

Figure 3

Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations


Racialized School Organization
Legitimize Unequal Distribution of Resources
Normative Engagement Practices
Racial & (Im)migrant Ideologies
Diminished Agency
Exclusion of Families
Agentic Families

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter reviewed research and theory relevant to dual credit access and family engagement in the context of college preparation. Despite policy shifts towards equity in college preparatory programs and efforts by educational institutions to create just dual credit opportunities, schools have failed Latinx students systemically in accessing these programs. Their families experience exclusion, compounded by raciolinguistic ideologies that discredit their involvement in the college preparation process. Furthermore, familial perspectives towards dual credit access are seldom the focus of school institutions when considering how to equitably distribute knowledge and resources related to these programs.

The body of literature, then, indicates a need for deeper inquiry into the ways organizational practices yield disparities in access to DC knowledge, particularly in the context of parental engagement with schools. Therefore, I apply a multidisciplinary framework to examine the school practices in a rural high school to involve families in the process of acquiring dual credit information. This approach places at its core the lived experiences and knowledge systems of Latinx (im)migrant families. By doing so, it not only challenges the existing exclusionary practices but also leverages these families' insights as a starting point for constructing alternative practices.

Chapter 3

Learning about Racialized Schools from Latinx (Im)migrant Farmworker Families

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive description for operationalizing the study. I begin by discussing the research design in light of the research purpose, highlighting the relevance of a qualitative approach rooted in a Chicana feminist epistemology. Second, I contextualize the setting of dual credit programs within Washington State, where the research was conducted. I then delve into the rationale for selecting the specific school and community as the focus of the study, along with the criteria that guided this choice. Furthermore, I outline the methods used for data collection and analysis, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, and how I navigated my role as a border-crosser researcher. Throughout these subsections, I highlight how principles from Chicana feminist epistemology shaped my methodological choices. Lastly, I conclude with a summary of the key points covered in this chapter.

Research Design and Methodology

I used a qualitative research design grounded in Chicana feminist epistemology to explore the experiences of Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families with racialized educational structures. My study focused on two primary areas: first, understanding how Central High School communicated information about dual credit programs to families and examining how families interpreted and responded to these educational practices. Second, illuminating the collective knowledge of Latinx (im)migrant farmworker parents in shaping equitable dual credit opportunities. Given my interest in the nuanced perspectives, lived experiences, and stories of families, a qualitative approach was most suitable for this study, allowing for an in-depth exploration beyond what quantitative data could offer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My dissertation addressed the following questions:

1. How does Central High School, as a racialized organization, disseminate or withhold dual credit resources from Latinx (im)migrant families?
    a. How do families experience and interpret organizational practices and ideologies that shape their access to dual credit resources?
2. What strategies do Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families propose to increase equity in access to dual credit opportunities?

Basic Qualitative Study within a Chicana Epistemology

A central characteristic of a basic qualitative research design, similar to other qualitative methodologies such as ethnography and narrative inquiry, is understanding the meaning of a phenomenon through the perspective of people. This approach is rooted in social constructivism, which posits that individuals shape their realities based on their interpretations of experiences and environments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam & Tisdell (2016) delineate key motives for engaging in a basic qualitative study: "(1) [interest] in how people interpret their experiences; (2) [interest] in how they construct their worlds; and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). In line with this, my dissertation foregrounds the perspectives of families to delve into how organizational practices in distributing dual credit resources are perceived and navigated. It examines how these collective familial experiences provide valuable insights for reimagining and improving dual credit opportunities.

Positioned within a Chicana feminist epistemology, this qualitative research design builds from the subaltern knowledge and lived realities of Chicanx peoples (López et al., 2020). By adopting a critical approach, this research design acknowledges that living within interstices and margins provides entryways for constructing meaning that is "lived in the body, felt in the bones, and situated within the larger body politic in the form of public meta-narratives (McLaren, 1993)" (as cited in Cruz, 2001, p. 664). Put differently, Chicana epistemology situates the experiences and realities of Chicanx as the foundation of knowledge; it questions objectivity and challenges notions of an absolute, universal truth (Harding, 1992). Guided by this epistemological stance, my research design seeks to leverage the narratives, embodied wisdom, and ways of knowing of Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families found at the intersections of powered school systems and relationships.

Washington State's Dual Credit Programs

In Washington State, college preparatory programs coalesce exam-based and course-completion pathways into a comprehensive array of dual credit offerings. As defined by the Washington Student Achievement Council[11] (WSAC), dual credit programs provide students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits, either by completing college-level courses, through examinations, or via articulation agreements. In other words, there is no separation between exam-based and course-completion-based credit programs as they both provide students with the *potential* to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. In line with this inclusive approach to dual credit, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) endorses the following DC coursework: Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge International (CI), International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with exams, Running Start (RS), College in the High School (CHS), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit (see Table 2).

The Advanced Placement, Cambridge International, and International Baccalaureate programs offer students in grades 9-12 the opportunity to take college-level courses. These courses are delivered by high school instructors following a curriculum that is recognized nationally. Upon completion of the course, students can take a standardized exam to earn college credits. In the 2015 school year, nearly 63,000 out of 404,277 students in the state of Washington were enrolled in at least one AP course, 722 students were enrolled in Cambridge International, and 8,799 students were enrolled in an International Baccalaureate course (Light, 2016).

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[11] A council composed of nine members, tasked with the strategic planning and administration of programs to support student success and higher educational attainment levels in Washington.

College in the High School programs, much like AP, IB, and CI dual credit initiatives, offer students the opportunity to take college-level courses at their high school and simultaneously earn college credit. A key distinction of CHS from the aforementioned offerings lies in the way students acquire college credits: CHS participants receive credits upon completing their courses, bypassing the need for an examination. Moreover, the partnering college faculty and staff determine and approve the CHS curriculum instead of tapping into a nationally recognized curriculum. While students in exam-based dual credit programs typically do not incur tuition fees, CHS course fees are not covered by state funding[12], with costs capped at $65 per college credit (OSPI, 2023). Recent legislation under HB 1302 (2021) has expanded CHS eligibility to include 9th graders, whereas previously it was limited to 10th, 11th, and 12th graders. In the 2015 academic year, of the 404,277 students enrolled in dual credit courses in Washington, 19,104 were participating in CHS programs (Light, 2016).

Running Start is a dual-credit program that allows high school juniors and seniors to attend Washington's 34 community and technical colleges tuition-free (OSPI, 2023). This program is also available at four-year institutions such as Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, and Washington State University Tri-Cities. In contrast to the previous dual credit courses, Running Start is taught on a college campus by a college faculty member. Before enrolling in the program, students complete the Running Start Enrollment Verification

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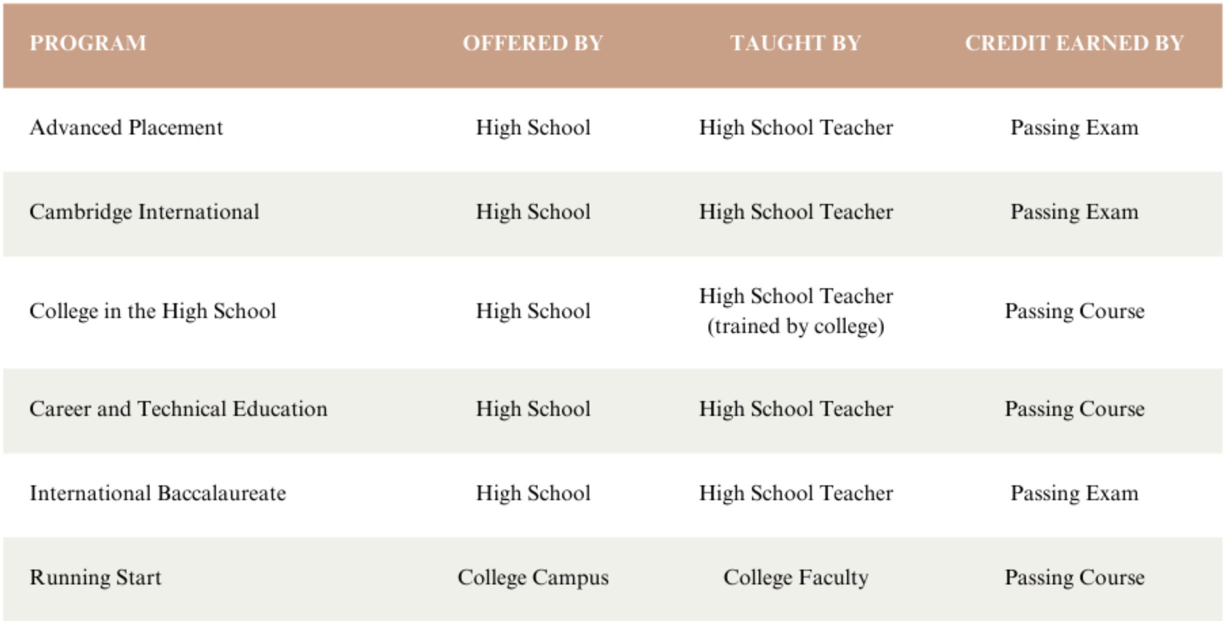
[12] There are subsidies available for rural schools and low-income students attending public schools.

Form (RSEVF) with their high school counselor to determine their quarterly credit eligibility. Eligible students can enroll up to 15 credits per quarter in courses at the 100 level or higher, with tuition expenses covered by the state. In 2015, 23,000 out of 404,277 students taking a dual credit course were enrolled in Running Start (Light, 2016). This program offers a distinct college-based learning environment, different from the high school-based dual credit alternatives.

Career and Technical Education dual credit courses offer students across all high school grades hands-on learning experiences tailored to various professional and technical fields. Previously referred to as Tech Prep, CTE programs are established through articulation agreements between high schools or school districts and a consortium that includes higher education institutions and the business sector (Light, 2016). CTE courses are taught by high school teachers in fields such as agriculture, health, business, and mechanical and industrial arts. Similar to RS and CHS dual credit programs, students who complete a CTE course—generally with a grade of “B” or higher—earn both high school and college credits. Nearly 120,000 students enrolled in CTE courses during the 2015 school year in Washington, making it the highest enrollment among dual credit programs (Light, 2016).

Table 2

Six types of dual credit programs offered in Washington State



PROGRAM	OFFERED BY	TAUGHT BY	CREDIT EARNED BY
Advanced Placement	High School	High School Teacher	Passing Exam
Cambridge International	High School	High School Teacher	Passing Exam
College in the High School	High School	High School Teacher (trained by college)	Passing Course
Career and Technical Education	High School	High School Teacher	Passing Course
International Baccalaureate	High School	High School Teacher	Passing Exam
Running Start	College Campus	College Faculty	Passing Course

Research Method

In the following sections, I describe the research method of the study, including the regional setting and the site selection of Central High School. I also outline the sampling and participant selection process, detailing the criteria used to form a purposive sample of eight Mexican (im)migrant parents. In addition to the primary focus on parents, I discuss additional sample sources that offer insights into the school's organizational routines.

Regional Setting

The research for this study was conducted in the Central Washington region in the Solano Valley, home to a Latinx (im)migrant farmworker community. This valley is one of the most diversified and robust agricultural regions in the nation. The region’s fertile soils, irrigated by the flowing Yellow River Canyon and Ponderosa River, has more than 1,750,000 acres of farmland that yield a variety of produce including asparagus, grapes, apricots, apples, cherries, mint, an assortment of berries, pumpkins, and 30 other types of fruits and vegetables during harvest season. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2017), Solano Valley ranks first nationwide in the production of apples and hops, with 164,000 acres dedicated to production. Underlying the economic and agricultural stability of Solano County is a racialized labor force. Even though the Latinx community makes up 53% of the Solano Valley's population, they make up over 76% of the farmworker labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Additionally, the majority of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in this area are culturally and linguistically rooted in Mexico (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Since the inception of the Bracero Program in the mid-1940s, this community has become an agricultural destination for migrant farmworkers and has maintained a large presence of Mexican immigrant families and their culture (Gamboa, 1981). Therefore, this historical and sociocultural backdrop made it an ideal site to learn the nuanced, racialized, and language-based educational practices that (im)migrant parents encounter within a rural school organization. Such an environment offered rich insights into the intersection of ethnicity, labor, and education in a historically migrant-driven community.

The site selection of the school in this geographic region was also informed by my cultural intuition and personal and political project of addressing educational inequities in *my* community district. Delgado Bernal (1998; 2016) contends that a Chicana researcher's cultural intuition is influenced by several sources of strength including personal and collective experiences that do not operate in a vacuum. Strengthened by past generational experiences, Chicanas and Chicanos "carry knowledge of conquest, loss of land, school and social segregation, labor market stratification, assimilation, and resistance" (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 564). Similarly, I carry the transnational experiences of my family with school systems— U.S. (Solano Valley, WA) and in México (Romita, GJ and Tlancualpican, PU) — that have been grounded in asymmetrical powered relations. Therefore, my site selection of a school in Solano Valley was intentionally driven by these collective and intergenerational experiences.

Site Selection of School

The research was conducted at Central High School, a rural institution serving 2,318 students in grades 9 through 12. Reflecting the demographics of its farmworker community, Central predominantly serves Latinx students, who make up 76.2% of the student body, with 25.8% identified as emergent bilinguals learning English as an additional language. According to state educational data, 81% of these students are classified as low-income, qualifying for free or subsidized lunches under school meal programs. Due to this high percentage, the school receives federal Title 1 funding as well as state funds designated for English language learners and students with limited economic resources. In contrast to the predominantly nondominant student population, the teaching staff is primarily white, comprising 74.8% of educators. This site was selected based on four criteria: (a) geographic location, (b) demographic composition, (c) the availability of dual credit programs, and (d) historical data on dual credit access.

During my 2020-2022 fellowship with Pacific STEMwork[13] I formed a relationship with Central High School when we partnered with the school's administration to investigate dual credit inequities. The Solano School District had previously identified gaps in dual credit access based on student demographics, leading to the suspicion at Central High School that Latinx students might be underrepresented in their dual credit offerings. With funding from an OSPI grant titled "Building Equitable, Sustainable Dual Credit," the school's administration collaborated with Pacific STEMwork on a multi-methodology research project from Fall 2020 to Spring 2021.

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[13] Pacific STEMwork is a statewide, education nonprofit working to ensure that youth experiencing systemic inequities have access to high-quality STEM education and pathways that will help them thrive in the state's technology-driven economy.

This project involved analyzing master course schedules, conducting teacher and student surveys, and interviewing students. The objective was to shed light on disparities in representation within the school's dual credit offerings, which include Advanced Placement, Running Start, College in the High School, and Career and Technical Education programs. Findings from the study revealed racialized, linguistic, and gendered trends in accelerated college preparatory courses, particularly those related to STEM. During the 2020-2021 school year, 57.4% of the 1,708 Latinx 9th-12th grade students at Central High School completed a dual credit course. In contrast, 61.8% of the 455 white students in the same grades completed a dual credit course (see Figure 4). Regarding language status, 51% of the 586 English Language Learners (ELL) in grades 9-12 completed a dual credit course. Among the 1,690 non-ELL students in the same grades, 61.2% completed a dual credit course (see Figure 5). Further analysis of specific dual credit courses—AP and CTE[14]—showed that Latinx students, when disaggregated by gender, were underrepresented or overrepresented compared to their white counterparts (see Figure 6 and Figure 7)[15]. These inequities in dual credit access across racial and linguistic lines raised questions for me about how Latinx immigrant families were experiencing similar patterns of racialization. Leveraging this initial research, I identified an area that had been overlooked—the perspectives of families—as critical for deepening the school's understanding of the existing inequities in dual credit access.

Figure 4

Percent of Students Completing a Dual Credit Course by Race

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[14] At the time of the pilot study with Pacific STEMwork, the only available data disaggregated by race pertained to Advanced Placement coursework and Career and Technical Education coursework.

[15] A more detailed analysis of these AP and CTE inequities is presented in Part I of the Findings Chapter.

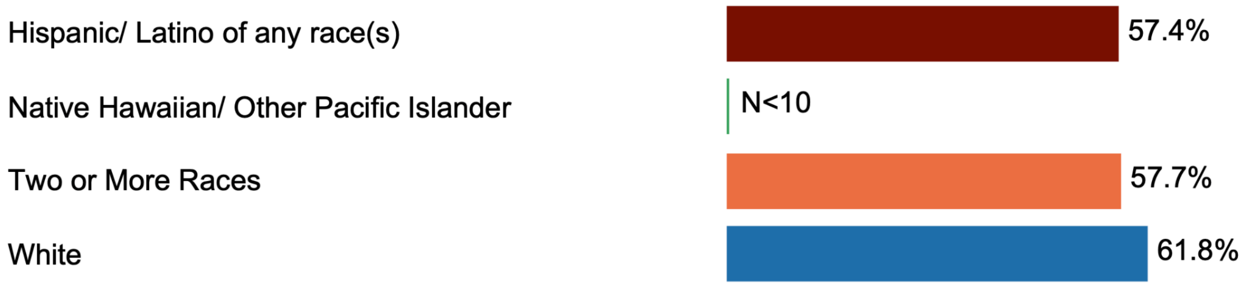


Figure 5

Percent of Students Completing a Dual Credit Course by Language Learner Status

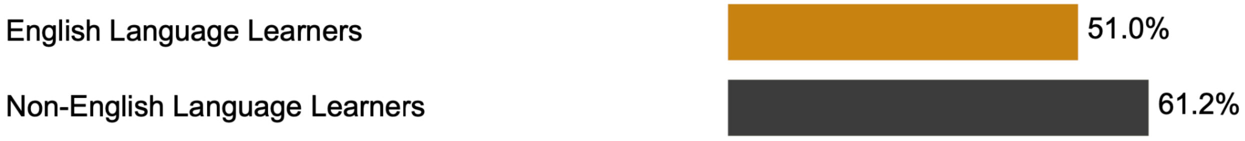


Figure 6

Percent of Students Enrolled in at Least 1 AP Math Course

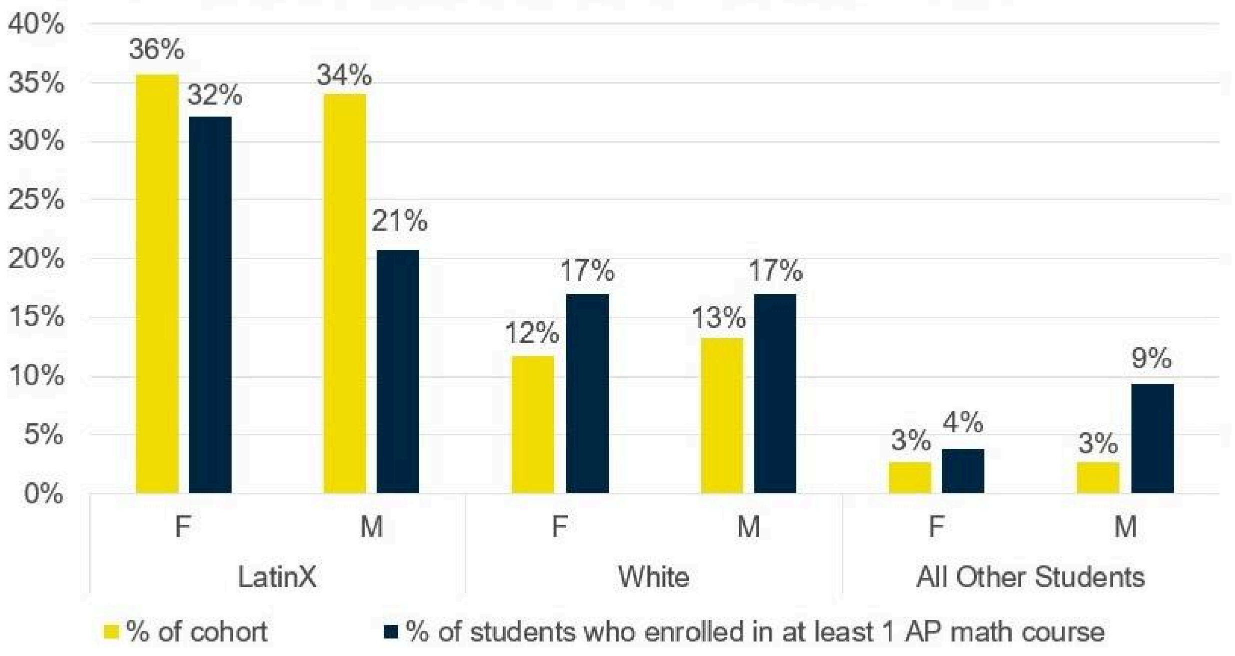
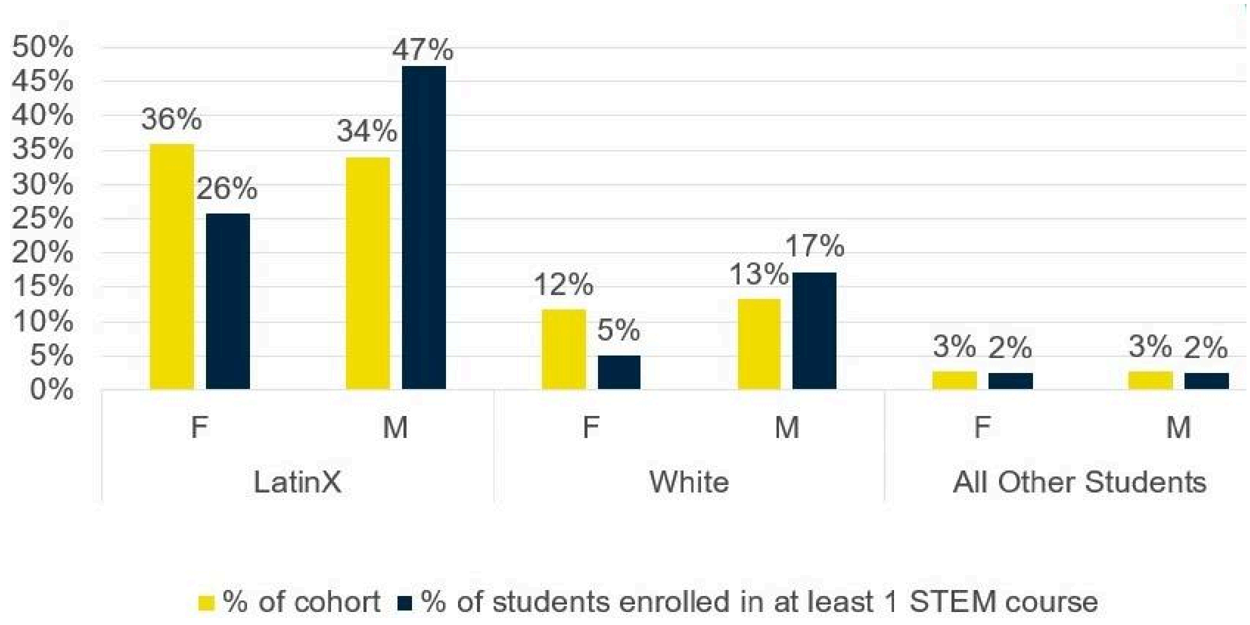


Figure 7

Percent of Students Enrolled in at Least 1 CTE STEM Course



Sampling and Participants

In collaboration with Central High School's administration, I worked alongside Reid Becker, the College and Career Specialist, and Lucía Méndez and Paloma Ramirez, the Migrant Staff Specialists, to identify potential Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families interested in participating in my dual credit parent pláticas. I shared a synopsis of my dissertation research with school staff and provided them with my contact details for further communication. Although Lucía and Paloma initially identified 12 potential parent participants, only 8 were ultimately able to partake in the study, meeting the specific criteria and being able to commit their time to the research.

I formed a homogeneous purposive sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) consisting of 8 Mexican (im)migrant parents living in this rural community (see Table 3 for participant demographics). My criterion-based sampling (Patton, 2015) included (a) parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled at Central High School; (b) participants who identify as Latinx immigrants; (c) participants who are currently employed as farmworkers or have a considerable history working in agricultural labor; (d) parents of students across different grade levels; and (e) participants with varied levels of experience with dual credit programs. Once again, my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) guided the small nonrandom sampling (Patton, 2015). These dimensions, in more ways than one, were shaped by my own experience growing up in Solano Valley within a family and community of Mexican immigrants that harvest the lands of the valley. This background provided a valuable perspective in selecting parents from Central High School for the study, ensuring the sample reflected the lived realities of the community.

The parents participating in the study identified as Mexican immigrants from diverse states such as Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Guerrero, Michoacán, and Hidalgo. Their ages ranged from 38 to 48, and they had varying levels of formal education, with most having completed only up to elementary school, between second and sixth grade. They have been part of the Solano community for periods ranging from 4 to 19 years, with some being recent arrivals and others more established in the region. Most families had 3 to 6 children, with typically only 1 or 2 children enrolled at Central High School. Although I did not ask about their immigration status, I learned that some of my participants and their children were undocumented. This diversity in background and experience provided a nuanced context for the research, which sought to probe into their views on dual credit programs and the intersecting racial implications within the educational organization.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Participant Name	Age	Birthplace	Schooling Level[16]	No. of Children	Years Living in Solano
Benito	44	Oaxaca, MX	Primary School	6	16
Ana Xochi	43	Oaxaca, MX	Junior High School	6	15
Miguel Ángel	39	Sinaloa, MX	Junior High School	3	4
Mireya	38	Jalisco, MX	Primary School	4	7
Magdalena	43	Guerrero, MX	Primary School	3	19
Lupita	44	Michoacán, MX	Primary School	3	13
Brenda Lizeth	41	Hidalgo, MX	Primary School	2	18
Ximena	48	Hidalgo, MX	High School	3	19

While the primary focus of the analysis was on the parent sample, I also included school employees to gain insight into Central High School's organizational routines for distributing dual credit and college preparatory resources. The school personnel were purposefully sampled based on their specialization in dual credit programs and their relationships with immigrant families. This included four staff members: the school's College and Career Specialist, two Migrant Staff Specialists, and the College Success Foundation's (CSF) Family Engagement Specialist. Additionally, supplementary data from the pilot study with Pacific STEMwork was incorporated. This data included responses from nine Central High School students who reflected the broader student body in terms of grade level, gender, race, GPA, and language spoken. The student sample also included both dual credit and non-dual credit participants.

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[16] In Mexico, the education system is structured into three main levels: primary school (primaria), which includes grades 1 through 6; junior high school (secundaria), which encompasses grades 7 through 9; and high school (preparatoria), covering grades 10 through 12. This division reflects the standard progression of formal education within the country.

Data Collection

Qualitative studies aim to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of a phenomenon. This involves using methods that prioritize obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Various methods are employed to collect descriptive data, including formal and informal interviews, group discussions, surveys, documents, and observations, among others (Pain, Whitman, & Milledge, 2011). When weaved with a feminista perspective, these qualitative methods become tools—or *herramientas*[17]—that rest on the principles of *respeto*, reciprocity, and vulnerability with research participants (Delgado Bernal, 2020; Saavedra & Salazar Pérez, 2014).

In this vein, I used individual and group pláticas to explore the experiences of Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families with racialized schools and to understand how their collective wisdom could inform dual credit practices and processes. Through individual pláticas, I gleaned insights into how Central High School distributes information and resources related to dual credit, and how parents individually interpret these institutional practices. Group pláticas, on the other hand, allowed for collective interpretation of racial and linguistic inequities in dual credit coursework, drawing on preliminary study findings to suggest ways to increase access and equity within these programs.

In addition to gathering primary data through pláticas with parents, I also conducted informal interviews with several key school personnel. I collected observational and digital data as well, which provided deeper insights into the organizational dynamics influencing families' access to dual credit resources. Additionally, I used supplemental data from the larger pilot study.

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[17] The literal translation of *herramientas* in English is “methods”, however, working from a Chicana feminist episteme, Saavedra and Salazar Pérez contend that Chicana researchers recreate and reimagine methodological techniques to perform and engage with research that stems from the marginalization of brown/black, mestiza border bodies.

This included course enrollment and outcome data, surveys from staff and students, and student empathy interviews.

Individual Pláticas

Departing from traditional interview models, a plática format creates a more intimate dynamic of interviewing or engaging in conversations with participants (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). According to Gonzalez (2001), pláticas are a “way to gather family and cultural knowledge through communication of thoughts, memories, ambiguities, and new interpretations" (p. 647). Moreover, pláticas prioritize establishing political trust and cultivating relationships that connect individual experiences to larger sociopolitical realities (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Through individual pláticas with parents, this method provided a deeper understanding of how Central High School's racialized practices of disseminating college preparatory and dual credit resources intersected with broader patterns of inequities.

From November 2021 to February 2022, I held 8 individual pláticas with parents across various platforms, including in-person meetings at Central's Career Center, visits to parents' homes, phone calls, and Zoom gatherings. In the sessions that occurred at Central High School, Lucía and Paloma, the school’s Migrant Staff Specialists, also attended these pláticas alongside parents. These discussions were guided by semi-structured questions designed to learn from Latinx (im)migrant farmworker parents' insights on the school's college preparatory resources and their understanding of dual credit programs (refer to appendix A for the interview guide). All interviews were carried out in Spanish and varied in length from 40 to 90 minutes. Each session began with an overview of the informed consent process, followed by the signing of the consent form. I voice-recorded all interviews to capture full responses to the questions. In addition to recording interview sessions, I also maintained written field notes during each interview and drafted analytic memos post-interview, highlighting emerging themes in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The initial transcription of these interviews was done using AI transcription software, achieving an accuracy rate between 85-90%. I then meticulously reviewed and refined these transcriptions to ensure complete accuracy. For confidentiality, I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and securely stored their interview data in a password-protected cloud service.

Group Pláticas

Platicás as a collective space offers participants a platform to engage in a fluid exchange of stories and experiences with each other *and* with the researcher (Gonzalez, 1999; 2001). As opposed to more conventional forms of focus group arrangements, pláticas recognize that knowledge is partial and socially constructed, therefore participants are viewed as active contributors to the meaning-making process (Guajardo et al., 2014). Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016) highlight that pláticas are built upon five key principles: (a) anchoring the research in decolonial feminist thought; (b) recognizing a relational principle that values participants as co-constructors of knowledge; (c) weaving participants' daily lived experiences into the research; (d) viewing pláticas as spaces for potential healing; and (e) emphasizing reciprocity and openness in the research process. Guided by these principles, I designed my group platicás to leverage families as agentic knowers and doers who play a critical role in shaping Central High School's school practices. This approach allowed Latinx (im)migrant farmworker parents to collaboratively interpret the dual credit course data from the initial study and formulate strategies for improving access to dual credit resources, thereby ensuring their insights were central to the discourse on educational equity.

Between January and March 2022, I facilitated eight virtual group pláticas via Zoom (refer to appendix B for session overviews), creating a space for families to share their experiences and engage in a collaborative learning process. Out of the original eight participants, only five could consistently commit to these group sessions, though we occasionally experienced an absence due to work obligations. Conducted in Spanish, each plática lasted an hour and was audio-recorded to ensure a comprehensive capture of the discussions. As with the individual pláticas, I took detailed written notes during each group session and compiled analytical memos afterward (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These notes and memos focused on the strategies parents proposed for improving the dual credit system. This process allowed me to revisit and clarify their suggestions with them at later stages, ensuring an accurate representation of their insights and recommendations.

Plática 1

The first plática was dedicated to cultivating "thick multi-stranded" relationships and holding space *en convivencia* (González et al., 2005; Trinidad Galván, 2015). Although I had previously engaged with each parent individually, this session was designed to nurture a sense of politicized trust among us. We centered our discussion on familial aspirations, articulating our hopes for our children's futures and the next generation in our community. Additionally, we delved into the concept of dual credit, exploring its meaning, benefits, and various models, such as exam-based and course-completion-based programs. This plática also explored the different types of dual credit programs available at Central High School.

Plática 2

During the second plática, we delved into the quantitative data on course enrollment gathered from the pilot study. Parents reviewed historical enrollment data for dual credit courses at Central High School, spanning from the 2017 to 2020 graduates. Findings indicated that Latinx students were not receiving the same dual credit experiences as white students.

Specifically, it showed that Latinx students were underrepresented in AP math courses. Conversely, Latinx male students were overrepresented in lower-level CTE offerings, such as in fields related to agriculture. White students, however, were overrepresented within CTE courses in fields that lead to wage-sustaining careers such as technology, health care, and engineering. Furthermore, when examining these enrollment trends alongside postsecondary outcomes, it was evident that students from Central High School who participated in dual credit programs were more likely to matriculate into and complete postsecondary education compared to their peers who did not take any dual credit courses.

Plática 3

We delved further into the analysis of dual credit data, focusing on key insights from surveys conducted among staff and students. Findings showed a substantial gap between the postsecondary aspirations of students and how staff perceived these aspirations. That is, students at Central High School had higher aspirations to obtain a postsecondary education than what the staff believed. This was particularly true for Spanish-speaking students, who showed greater college aspirations compared to their English-speaking counterparts. Yet, these Spanish-speaking students faced significant barriers in accessing information about dual credit programs. Compared to English-speaking students, they were less likely to have received comprehensive information about the dual credit options available at their school. For example, only 16% of Spanish-speaking students were informed about the Running Start program, and a mere 4% were aware of the AP courses. The session also shed light on the staff's familiarity with dual credit options, revealing that only half of the certified staff at Central felt well-versed in the four types of dual credit programs the school offers.

Plática 4

We delved into the final set of data from the dual credit pilot project, focusing on the qualitative insights gleaned from student interviews. During this session, parents learned that teachers and peers were the primary sources of dual credit information for students. Secondly, they learned that students had varying levels of awareness about dual credit courses, with first-generation students generally possessing less knowledge about these opportunities. Thirdly, they learned about the disparities in college preparedness among Central High School students, linked to their course enrollment. Specifically, interview data revealed that students enrolled in dual credit courses felt better prepared for college compared to their peers in regular courses. Additionally, parents gained insight into the recommendations provided by students for the Central High School staff to better support their learning and their postsecondary educational goals.

Plática 5

I verified the accuracy of the recommendations and strategies they had proposed in earlier sessions for improving access to dual credit information and opportunities at Central High School. This session also served as a member check (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), ensuring I had accurately interpreted and documented their suggestions, which emerged from their experiential knowledge and cultural wisdom. We also strategized on how to communicate these collective recommendations to the school's administrators. Part of the plan involved inviting administrators to one of our pláticas, allowing them to hear directly from the families about their proposed changes and re-envisioning school practices to cultivate more equitable access to dual credit opportunities.

Plática 6

We focused on planning for the upcoming session, including school administrators. This involved assigning specific recommendations to each parent from the compiled list and determining the sequence in which they would present their suggestions and the rationale behind them. Additionally, we deliberated on the need for interpretation services to facilitate communication between Spanish-speaking parents and English-speaking administrators, considering whether simultaneous interpretation would be necessary for the meeting. Finally, we reflected on our aspirations for the plática, with a shared desire among the group that our collective voice, embodying our experiences and perspectives, would be not only conveyed but also given due consideration by the school's leadership.

Plática 7

Parents met with key administrators from Central High School, including Reid Becker, the school's College and Career Specialist, representatives from the College Success Foundation, and Migrant Staff Specialists. During this session, parents expressed their aspirations for their children's futures and presented their recommendations and strategies aimed at fostering more equitable access to dual credit opportunities and resources. The session also provided a platform for administrators to respond to these insights. This exchange allowed the parents a moment to reflect on and share their feelings about having their voices heard by the school's leadership.

Plática 8

In our final plática, parents engaged in collective reflection on their previous meeting with the administrators, focusing on their experiences of being heard. They discussed what aspects were successful, and what areas could be improved to more effectively communicate their recommendations. I brought to their attention some comments from the Zoom chat during plática 7 that they may have missed, offering further context and feedback. Additionally, I informed them that the Family Engagement Specialist from the College Success Foundation, who attended the meeting, expressed interest in following up with them to leverage their expertise for influencing school change. The session concluded with a discussion on the impact of our collective voice and cultural insights, emphasizing the significance of this collaborative process in driving equitable changes within the educational system.

Complementary and Supplementary Data

From November 2021 to March 2022, I conducted a series of 1-hour informal interviews to gather insights into family participation expectations and dual credit inequities highlighted by the pilot study. These included three informal interviews with the College and Career Specialist, one with each Migrant Staff Specialist, and another with the CSF Family Engagement Specialist. Additionally, in a few of the individual pláticas with parents, migrant staff specialists joined to share their perspectives. The College and Career Specialist and CSF Family Engagement Specialist also participated in the 7th plática session to learn from parents' perspectives and share their thoughts on their recommendations. Besides these interviews, I conducted three staff observations via Zoom, which included administrators, teachers, and certified staff. Finally, I explored the school website after learning from parents that DC resources were not available in Spanish.

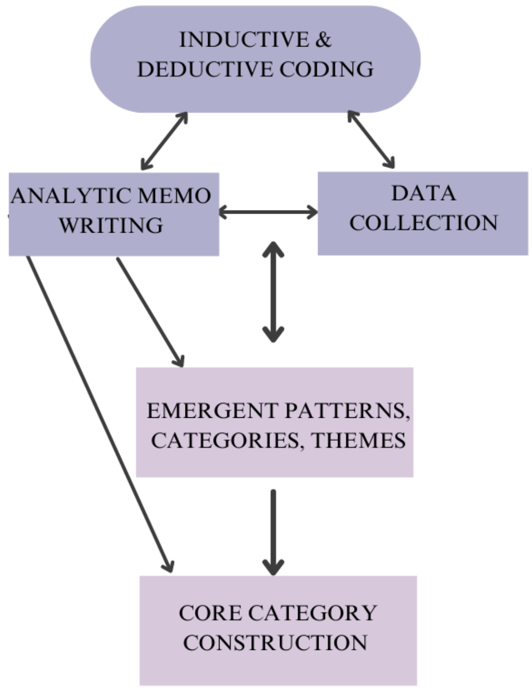
I also drew data from a larger pilot study, which included information on course-taking and outcomes, as well as surveys from both staff and students, and student empathy interviews. Historical course-taking and outcomes data were examined for cohorts from 2017 to 2020 at Central High School, focusing on dual credit courses by type, course, demographics, GPA, and pathway (for CTE). This analysis utilized the OSPI Education Data System Administration’s Secure Tableau Server and Central’s Skyward system. Postsecondary outcomes were reviewed using the National Student Clearinghouse. A total of 1,455 students and 80 staff members completed the survey. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 students to learn about their experiences in dual credit courses, their post-secondary plans, and the types of support they were receiving from their school.

Data Analysis

The process of data collection and analysis in qualitative research is recursive and simultaneous, not linear or separate (Saldaña, 2021). This is even more so with this dissertation research design that is premised on meaning-making processes for *tejiendo una teoría de cambio.* As such, during the data collection phase, I engaged in the practice of writing analytical memos after each plática and informal interview to begin delineating emerging patterns, categories, and themes (see Figure 8 for reference). The data set for this project included transcripts from both individual and group pláticas with parents, transcripts from informal interviews, analytical memos, observational notes, audio recordings, and pilot study data. A three-step process for category construction was used to make sense of the data and building theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Figure 8

Model for Concurrent Data Collection and Analysis. Adapted from Saldaña, 2021


INDUCTIVE & DEDUCTIVE CODING
ANALYTIC MEMO WRITING
DATA COLLECTION
EMERGENT PATTERNS, CATEGORIES, THEMES
CORE CATEGORY CONSTRUCTION

In my first phase of data analysis, I began by organizing and restructuring my extensive dataset, a process Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as *data reduction*. This involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data to make it more manageable. To facilitate this, I used Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software, to systematically organize my data corpus. Within Dedoose, I uploaded all transcripts and documents and applied line numbering to each sentence for easy referencing of quotes. I also broke down the text into shorter paragraphs or stanzas at points with a shift in topic or subtopic (Gee, Michaels, & O’Conner, 1992). To further streamline the analysis, I categorized my dataset into two distinct sections: “Individual Parent Pláticas” and “Group Parent Pláticas”. This distinction allowed for more efficient handling of the data, with one category focusing on organizational practices and interpretations, and the other on the collaborative efforts to enact changes within the school system. This categorization, moreover, allowed a nuanced examination of the distinct but interconnected aspects of the study.

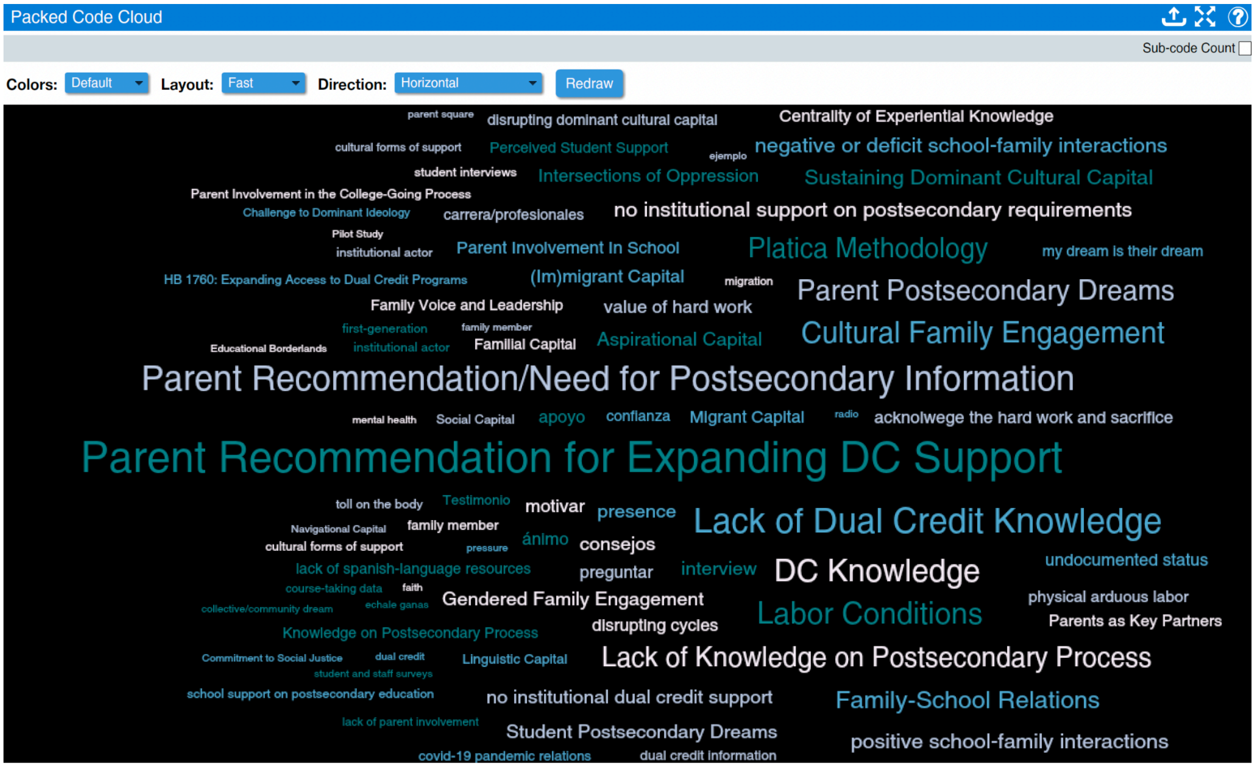
Following the organization and formatting of my data, I moved on to another facet of data reduction, which involved coding and beginning the process of category construction. Using Dedoose's "Great Quotes" tag, I first applied this to any intriguing data or "key moment" passages across the entire dataset (Sullivan, 2012). I then targeted the most salient portion of the data corpus related to my research questions. In this initial coding cycle, I adopted a dialectical process, blending both inductive and deductive methods (Saldaña, 2021). Inductively, I identified emerging patterns, forming descriptive or "in vivo" codes based on participants' own words (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). General analytic codes emerged related to organizational practices (Ray, 2019) such as "Open House" and "ParentSquare," and experiential knowledge (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) such as "animar" and "migrant labor". Concurrently, I implemented a deductive coding strategy, starting with a set of a priori codes informed by theoretical constructs and literature, which I later expanded into a more comprehensive codebook. This process included coding for different types of racialized organization processes like legitimization of unequal resources and shaping agency (Ray, 2019). This dual approach allowed me to integrate specific concepts from my theoretical framework, ensuring a thorough and nuanced analysis that intertwined theory with the lived experiences and insights of subaltern families.

In the phase of recalibrating analysis and data display (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), I delved deeper into the data to identify and discern systematic patterns and connections. The emerging patterns from my first round of analysis were collapsed into broader categories or analytic units for further refinement. I employed a second-cycle coding method, specifically a code landscaping approach (Saldaña, 2021), which combines textual analysis with visual representation to provide a visual overview of the most salient codes in my data, helping me establish patterns between and across categories. First, I used the "packed code cloud" feature in

Dedoose (refer to Figure 9), which offers a macro perspective by displaying code frequencies in a cloud format, with more frequently occurring codes shown in larger fonts. This bird's-eye view facilitated an understanding of which codes were most prevalent. Second, I used Dedoose's “code co-occurrence” feature (refer to Figure 10) to generate a symmetrical matrix that displayed how often each pair of codes was applied to the same data excerpt, highlighting overlaps and intersections in the coding. Throughout this process, I regularly discussed my evolving analysis and emerging themes with peers and mentors, receiving critical consideration to refine my core categories and their relationships further.

Figure 9

Dedoose Packed Code Cloud Graphic

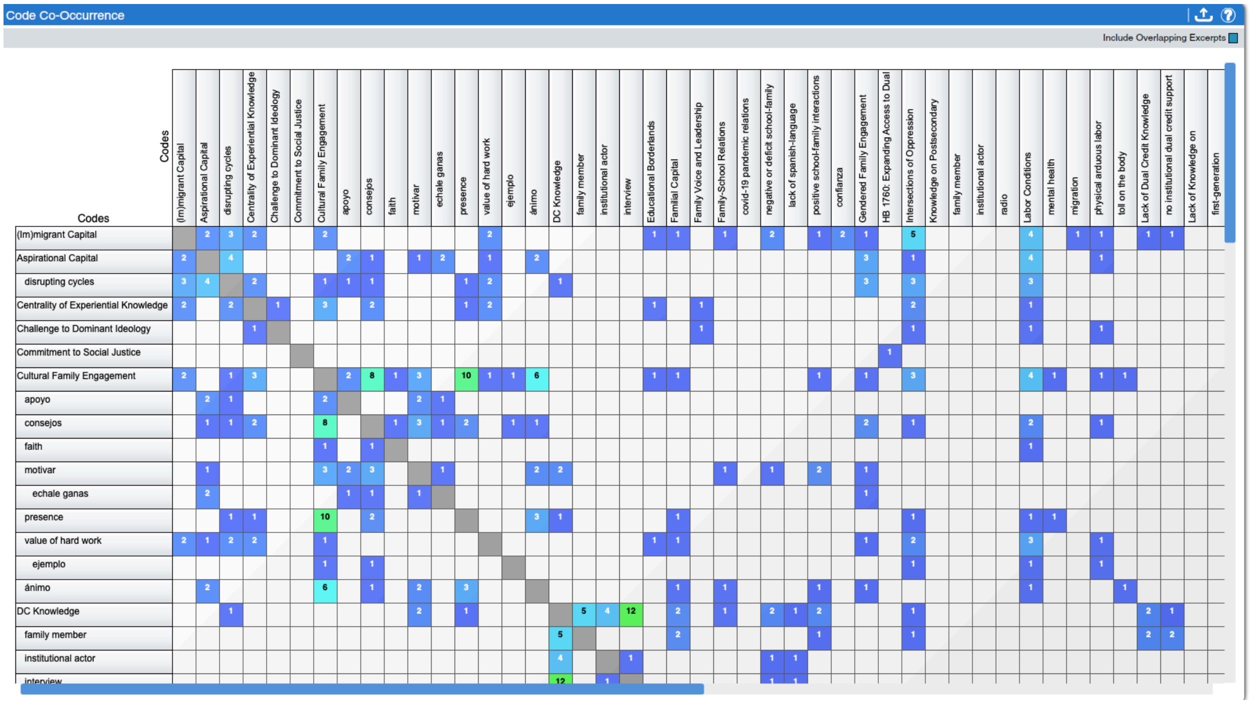


Colors: Default
Layout: Fast
Direction: Horizontal

Packed Code Cloud
Sub-code Count ☐
Redraw
parent square
disrupting dominant cultural capital
Centrality of Experiential Knowledge
cultural forms of support
Perceived Student Support
ejemplo
negative or deficit school-family interactions
student interviews
Intersections of Oppression
Sustaining Dominant Cultural Capital
Parent Involvement in the College-Going Process
Challenge to Dominant Ideology
carrera/profesionales
no institutional support on postsecondary requirements
Pilot Study
institutional actor
Parent Involvement in School
Platica Methodology
my dream is their dream
HB 1760: Expanding Access to Dual Credit Programs
(Im)migrant Capital
migration
Parent Postsecondary Dreams
Family Voice and Leadership
value of hard work
first-generation
family member
Educational Borderlands
institutional actor
Familial Capital
Aspirational Capital
Cultural Family Engagement
Parent Recommendation/Need for Postsecondary Information
mental health
Social Capital
apoyo
confianza
Migrant Capital
radio
acknolwege the hard work and sacrifice
Parent Recommendation for Expanding DC Support
toll on the body
Testimonio
motivar
presence
Lack of Dual Credit Knowledge
Navigational Capital
family member
cultural forms of support
pressure
ánimo
consejos
lack of spanish-language resources
preguntar
interview
DC Knowledge
undocumented status
course-taking data
faith
collective/community dream
echale ganas
Gendered Family Engagement
Labor Conditions
physical arduous labor
Parents as Key Partners
Knowledge on Postsecondary Process
disrupting cycles
Commitment to Social Justice
dual credit
Linguistic Capital
Lack of Knowledge on Postsecondary Process
student and staff surveys
school support on postsecondary education
no institutional dual credit support
Family-School Relations
lack of parent involvement
Student Postsecondary Dreams
positive school-family interactions
covid-19 pandemic relations
dual credit information

Figure 10

Dedoose Code Co-Occurrence Graphic



Code Co-Occurrence

Include Overlapping Excerpts ☑

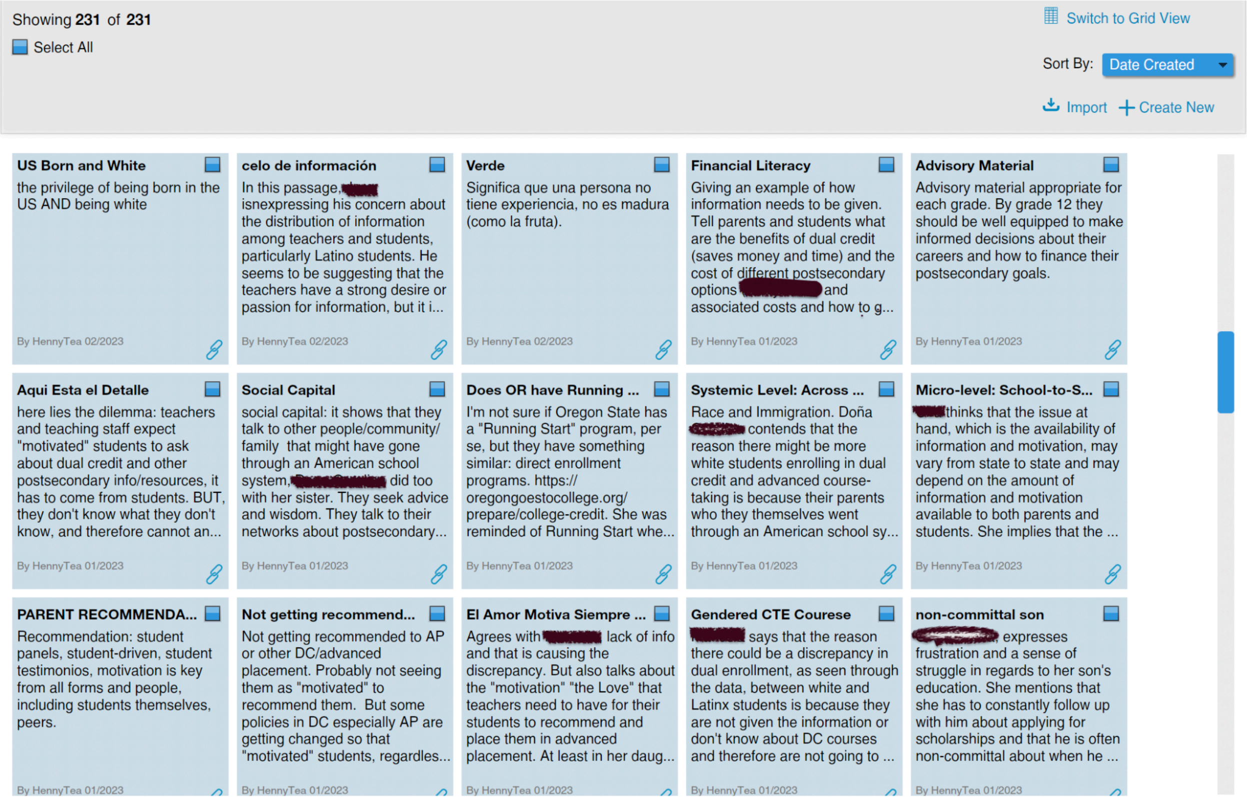
Codes	(Im)migrant Capital	Aspirational Capital	disrupting cycles	Centrality of Experiential Knowledge	Challenge to Dominant Ideology	Commitment to Social Justice	Cultural Family Engagement	apoyo	consejos	faith	motivar	echale ganas	presence	value of hard work	ejemplo	ánimo	DC Knowledge	family member	institutional actor	interview	Educational Borderlands	Familial Capital
(Im)migrant Capital		2	3	2			2							2							1	1
Aspirational Capital	2		4					2	1		1	2		1		2						
disrupting cycles	3	4		2			1	1	1				1	2			1					
Centrality of Experiential Knowledge	2		2		1		3		2				1	2							1	
Challenge to Dominant Ideology				1																		
Commitment to Social Justice																						
Cultural Family Engagement	2		1	3				2	8	1	3		10	1	1	6					1	1
apoyo		2	1				2				2	1										
consejos		1	1	2			8			1	3	1	2		1	1						
faith							1		1													
motivar		1					3	2	3			1				2	2					
echale ganas		2						1	1		1											
presence			1	1			10		2							3	1					1
value of hard work	2	1	2	2			1														1	1
ejemplo							1		1													
ánimo		2					6		1		2		3									1
DC Knowledge			1								2		1					5	4	12		2
family member																	5					2
institutional actor																	4			1		
interview																	12		1			

Codes	Family Voice and Leadership	Family-School Relations	covid-19 pandemic relations	negative or deficit school-family	lack of spanish-language	positive school-family interactions	confianza	Gendered Family Engagement	HB 1760: Expanding Access to Dual	Intersections of Oppression	Knowledge on Postsecondary	family member	institutional actor	radio	Labor Conditions	mental health	migration	physical arduous labor	toll on the body	Lack of Dual Credit Knowledge	no institutional dual credit support	Lack of Knowledge on	first-generation
(Im)migrant Capital		1		2		1	2	1		5					4		1	1		1	1		
Aspirational Capital								3		1					4			1					
disrupting cycles								3		3					3								
Centrality of Experiential Knowledge	1									2					1								
Challenge to Dominant Ideology	1									1					1			1					
Commitment to Social Justice									1														
Cultural Family Engagement						1		1		3					4	1		1	1				
apoyo																							
consejos								2		1					2			1					
faith															1								
motivar		1		1		2		1															
echale ganas								1															
presence										1					1	1							
value of hard work								1		2					3			1					
ejemplo										1					1			1					
ánimo		1				1		1							1				1				
DC Knowledge		1		2	1	2				1										2	1		
family member						1				1										2	2		
institutional actor				1	1																		
interview				1	1																		

In the next stage of qualitative analysis– conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994)– I refined interpretations and employed strategies to substantiate them. Miles and Huberman (1994) define "conclusion drawing" as a reflective process where the researcher considers the meanings derived from the data and their broader implications, essentially moving from understanding the interconnections among key themes towards constructing theories. This approach, referred to as "making conceptual theoretical coherence," entails linking identified patterns to broader propositions. For example, I connected dominant school practices within Central High School to the unequal access to dual credit information and resources, thereby positing the overarching theory that educational organizations perpetuate a racialized hierarchy in the availability of resources and opportunities for families and students. "Verification," as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), involves repeatedly revisiting the data to cross-check or confirm these emerging conclusions. For this, I frequently referred back to my field and memo notes (see Figure 11), as well as to the data transcripts, as part of the reexamination process. The strategies and steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this verification process are detailed further in the subsequent section.

Figure 11

Example of Memo Notes Revisited in Dedoose



Showing 231 of 231

Sort By: Date Created

US Born and White
the privilege of being born in the US AND being white
By HennyTea 02/2023

celo de información
In this passage, [redacted] isnexpressing his concern about the distribution of information among teachers and students, particularly Latino students. He seems to be suggesting that the teachers have a strong desire or passion for information, but it i...
By HennyTea 02/2023

Verde
Significa que una persona no tiene experiencia, no es madura (como la fruta).
By HennyTea 02/2023

Financial Literacy
Giving an example of how information needs to be given. Tell parents and students what are the benefits of dual credit (saves money and time) and the cost of different postsecondary options [redacted] and associated costs and how to g...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Advisory Material
Advisory material appropriate for each grade. By grade 12 they should be well equipped to make informed decisions about their careers and how to finance their postsecondary goals.
By HennyTea 01/2023

Aqui Esta el Detalle
here lies the dilemma: teachers and teaching staff expect "motivated" students to ask about dual credit and other postsecondary info/resources, it has to come from students. BUT, they don't know what they don't know, and therefore cannot an...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Social Capital
social capital: it shows that they talk to other people/community/family that might have gone through an American school system, [redacted] did too with her sister. They seek advice and wisdom. They talk to their networks about postsecondary...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Does OR have Running ...
I'm not sure if Oregon State has a "Running Start" program, per se, but they have something similar: direct enrollment programs. https://oregongoestocollege.org/prepare/college-credit. She was reminded of Running Start whe...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Systemic Level: Across ...
Race and Immigration. Doña [redacted] contends that the reason there might be more white students enrolling in dual credit and advanced course-taking is because their parents who they themselves went through an American school sy...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Micro-level: School-to-S...
[redacted] thinks that the issue at hand, which is the availability of information and motivation, may vary from state to state and may depend on the amount of information and motivation available to both parents and students. She implies that the ...
By HennyTea 01/2023

PARENT RECOMMENDA...
Recommendation: student panels, student-driven, student testimonios, motivation is key from all forms and people, including students themselves, peers.
By HennyTea 01/2023

Not getting recommend...
Not getting recommended to AP or other DC/advanced placement. Probably not seeing them as "motivated" to recommend them. But some policies in DC especially AP are getting changed so that "motivated" students, regardles...
By HennyTea 01/2023

El Amor Motiva Siempre ...
Agrees with [redacted] lack of info and that is causing the discrepancy. But also talks about the "motivation" "the Love" that teachers need to have for their students to recommend and place them in advanced placement. At least in her daug...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Gendered CTE Courese
[redacted] says that the reason there could be a discrepancy in dual enrollment, as seen through the data, between white and Latinx students is because they are not given the information or don't know about DC courses and therefore are not going to ...
By HennyTea 01/2023

non-committal son
[redacted], expresses frustration and a sense of struggle in regards to her son's education. She mentions that she has to constantly follow up with him about applying for scholarships and that he is often non-committal about when he ...
By HennyTea 01/2023

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Qualitative research positions the interpretation of the social world as subjective whereby "multiple or shared realities exist" (Kelly, 2005, p. 66). Rather than using traditional scientific criteria that attempt to generalize findings to a larger population, qualitative research relies on trustworthiness and rigor to assess and ensure the quality of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four strategies for establishing trustworthiness and rigor have been widely adopted for assessing the degree of confidence in data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Accordingly, I used credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to ensure internal and external validity.

Credibility in qualitative research can be enhanced through triangulation, which involves the use of multiple methods, data sources, investigators, or theoretical perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my study, I used multiple methods such as individual and group pláticas with Mexican (im)migrant parents and informal interviews with school staff. I also achieved triangulation by using varied data sources, such observations, interviews, and documents. Another key strategy for promoting validity and reliability is the use of member checks (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within the context of this study, member checks were approached from a Chicana feminist lens, prioritizing the inclusion of participants in the analysis process. This epistemological stance challenges the notion of a singular, dominant understanding of participants' lives (Delgado Bernal, 2001). As part of this, I shared my preliminary interpretations with parents regarding their strategies for improving equitable access to dual credit information and resources. This process served a dual purpose: firstly, to identify and address any potential discrepancies, such as disagreements with the emerging themes or interpretations, and secondly, to recognize parents' expertise in generating more nuanced understandings.

Furthermore, trustworthiness involves dependability, referring to the consistency and replicability of research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It underscores the importance of a detailed and transparent research process, ensuring that the study's conclusions can be replicated under similar conditions. In this chapter, I have detailed the research design, outlining each phase of the study and its alignment with the overarching objectives, thereby offering a clear roadmap that could be followed by another researcher. Such thorough documentation invites subsequent studies to build upon these findings and encourages critical engagement with the topic.

Transferability, or the extent to which research findings can be generalized or applied to other contexts, is needed to further secure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A key approach to improving transferability is through the use of thick description (Geertz, 1973), which involves providing detailed and nuanced depictions of the research context. I established a thick description of the research findings, particularly in Chapter 4, where I substantiated my conclusions with direct quotes from the pláticas. This way, the reader deepens their understanding of the research context and makes their determinations about transferability.

Confirmability, the fourth criterion, addresses the need for research findings to be grounded in the data, minimizing the influence of the researcher's personal biases. In line with the guidance of Lincoln and Guba (1985), I have established an audit trail by documenting each phase of the research process, including the raw data, protocols, analytical memos, and transcripts, among other aspects. As detailed earlier, all data, coding frameworks, and visual aids were systematically organized to transparently demonstrate the progression of the research and the basis of the conclusions drawn. Moreover, reflexivity—critical awareness of one's influence on the research—is integral to confirmability, which I elaborate on next.

Positionality and Subjectivity

A Chicana feminist epistemology foregrounds the centrality of a researcher's positionality and subjectivity within the research process, positing that knowledge is inherently shaped by social locations and experiences (Delgado Bernal, 1998). In this view, objectivity is not about detachment or neutrality, but rather about “strong objectivity” (Harding, 2013) – a concept that requires researchers to be aware of their own social positions and how they affect the research process.

My research is politically guided and informed by my cultural intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998). My family's racialized (im)migrant experience has framed the lens through which I view my lived experiences and those of subaltern communities. Growing up in a Mexican immigrant community, I have seen how systems of power regulate racialized and gendered bodies and knowledge to the point of breakdown and erasure, such as capitalist agricultural labor and school organizations. Yet, within these white-controlled structures, I have also experienced acts of resistance and the agency that communities possess in challenging marginalization. For these reasons, I approach my work with the lens that subaltern families possess critical knowledge and agency for enacting systemic change toward racial equity.

Achieving "strong objectivity" in my research involved a continuous practice of self-reflexivity, particularly critical for Chicana researchers navigating the "colonizer/colonized" identities within their communities (Villenas, 1996). This meant confronting my dual identity, as both colonized and, in certain contexts, being offered privileges adjacent to those of colonizers. I maintained a *sentipensante*[18] (Rendon, 2009) journal for examining moments of tension generated from my insider-outsider positionality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For example, one reflection highlighted how my status as a researcher and doctoral candidate conferred certain privileges in white spaces.

During our group plática about inviting school and district administrators to learn from parents' dual credit recommendations, my status as a researcher affiliated with an R1[19] institution played a role in bringing administrators to the table. While I was able to leverage my institutional power to hold space for nondominant parents to voice their concerns —often overlooked within organizational contexts— I also found myself grappling with the tension of potentially embodying a "savior" role. Therefore, as a border crosser (Villenas, 1996) of these insider and outsider spaces, situated in a third space, I understand the opportunities my positionality proffers in authoring a counternarrative of Latinx immigrant farmworker families but also the tensions embedded in these spaces.

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[18] Laura Rendon (2009) refers to *sentipensante* (sensing/thinking) as pedagogical practice of contemplative engagement.

[19] An R1 university, also known as a "Doctoral University - Very high research activity," is a classification given by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. R1 universities are recognized for their significant commitment to research, extensive doctoral programs, and high levels of federal research funding.

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, I elaborated on the operational framework of the study, outlining the research design and methods. I argued that a qualitative research design, informed by Chicana feminist epistemology, is most appropriate to the goals of this inquiry due to its focus on understanding participants' lived experiences. Specifically, my research is predicated on the voices and experiences of families living in the margins. Therefore, the selection of research methods, including individual and group pláticas, was intentional to build relational engagement with Latinx (im)migrant parents and to explore dynamics of power. Additional complementary and supplementary data from informal interviews, observations, document analysis, and pilot study offered insight into the school's organizational routines. Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously, allowing for an iterative understanding of emerging themes and insights. Central to the inquiry process were ensuring trustworthiness and negotiating my role as an insider/outsider researcher.

Chapter 4

Racialized Schools and Family Strategies

This chapter examines Central High School's distribution of dual credit resources and how Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families perceive and react to the inequities in these opportunities. The study reveals two main findings. First, Central High School created unequal access to dual credit information for Latinx (im)migrant parents through two key organizational routines: normative parent engagement practices and racial ideologies. A related sub-finding revealed that Latinx (im)migrant parents experienced marginalization and exclusion due to these racialized practices and ideologies. Secondly, parents proposed strategies to reshape and renegotiate school practices for equitable access to dual credit programs by leveraging their experiential and cultural knowledge.

This chapter is organized into three main parts. The first section offers an overview of the school's racialized structure that limited equitable access to dual credit programs through academic tracking. The second section explores the school's organizational practices and ideologies that perpetuated racial and linguistic disparities, examining how these shaped parent perceptions and their experiences with the school system. The third section focuses on how parents leveraged their collective experiential knowledge to propose strategies for more equitable access to dual credit resources and opportunities.

Part I: Racialized Tracking at Central High School

Part I provides an overview of the existing equity gaps at Central High School and lays the groundwork for the primary findings presented in Parts II and III. First, I discuss the inequitable distribution of students across dual credit courses. Following this, I examine the structural barriers of course scheduling that prevented Latinx and Spanish-speaking students from participating in dual credit programs. I then explore the differential structures and supports of academic tracking from the students' perspectives. Specifically, I address the disparities in support offered to students in dual credit versus non-dual credit courses, highlighting discrepancies in rigor and access to college-related information. Ultimately, I demonstrate how the landscape of racialized tracking at Central High School limited students' access to classes and opportunities.

Inequitable Dual Credit Access and Participation Enrollment

At Central High School, administrative data of the cohorts graduating from 2017 to 2020 revealed significant disparities in course enrollment. Latinx students were underrepresented in advanced placement (AP) math courses compared to their white peers. For instance, while Latinx female[20] students made up 36% of the cohort, only 32% were enrolled in at least one AP math course. Latinx male students were similarly underrepresented; they constituted 34% of the cohort but only 21% were enrolled in these courses. In contrast, white students had higher enrollment rates relative to their cohort representation; both white female students and male students formed 12% and 13% of the cohort, respectively, yet each group accounted for 17% of those enrolled in at least one AP math course.

These inequities extended to Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, with gender dynamics playing a salient role. Despite constituting 36% of the cohort, only 26% of Latinx female students were enrolled in at least one CTE STEM course. In contrast, Latinx male students, who comprised 34% of the cohort, had a higher enrollment rate of 47% in these courses. White female students, who made up 12% of the cohort, had a low enrollment rate of

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[20] I use "female" and "male" solely as adjectives, a deliberate choice intended to counter the dehumanizing effects of using these terms as nouns to describe individuals. Such usage often excludes and invisibilizes non-binary individuals by reinforcing a binary understanding of gender, thereby perpetuating exclusionary and oppressive norms.

5% in CTE STEM courses, whereas white male students, representing 13% of the cohort, had a higher enrollment rate of 17%. Central's College and Career Specialist, Reid Becker, explained that Latinx male students were mostly overrepresented in lower-level CTE offerings, such as in fields related to agriculture science. White male students, on the other hand, were overrepresented within CTE courses in fields that could lead to wage-sustaining careers such as technology, health care, and engineering. Becker highlighted the issue, stating:

> ... if we start looking at the numbers, there is going to be a significant overrepresentation [of Latinx males in lower-level CTE]. I've had them in agriculture [science] and they're like, "[Becker], I don't even want to go into agriculture [science], my counselor just gave me this class." And it's like, wow... they're already pigeonholed that they might not be successful in an academic class. That's just so wrong.

Becker's comment discloses that Latinx students were not overrepresented in lower-level CTE due to student preference or interest. Moreover, his comment that students are "pigeonholed" recognizes that racialized tracking structures deprive Students of Color of future educational opportunities.

While Latinx students were generally underrepresented in dual credit courses, emergent multilingual Latinx students faced an additional barrier due to scheduling conflicts. Central High School's course offering structure forced students to choose between English language acquisition courses and college preparatory opportunities, limiting their awareness and access to dual credit programs. As a result, Spanish-speaking students reported being significantly less informed about dual credit options compared to their English-speaking peers. Specifically, only 19% were informed about College in the High School (CHS), 16% about Running Start, 6% about Career and Technical Education (CTE), and 4% were aware of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This disparity in access is further illustrated by Becker's observation that students with beginning levels of English proficiency are often required to spend much of their day in English Language Learner (ELL) classes, limiting their ability to enroll in more rigorous academic courses like AP. He clarified:

> We just see a lot more representation in AP courses for our non-English language students. However, when we start looking at English language learners, we definitely see a drop-off. We typically see level three and level four students enrolling in AP classes, whereas level one and level two students often do not. This is largely because they need to take ESL classes for a chunk of their day and they don't have as much flexibility in their schedule.

This scheduling issue created an institutional obstacle for Latinx students, particularly those who need ELL support, as they faced a restrictive choice between continuing their language acquisition or pursuing advanced academic opportunities. In this way, the organizational structure reinforced not just racialized tracking but also linguistic academic tracking, where students' language proficiency levels dictate their access to dual credit opportunities.

Differential Supports in Dual Credit and Non-Dual Credit Coursework

Students' course-taking experiences at Central High School highlight differential pathways and supports between dual credit and standard courses. According to students, being enrolled in honors classes during freshman year set a precedent for subsequent access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This system, which based future course access on early academic performance, illustrates the school's method of organizing students by perceived academic ability from an early stage. A senior student explained the progression as follows:

> Every single class I had in freshman year was pretty much an honors class. So, when I went into my sophomore year, I was already enrolled in an AP class. It's like if you challenged yourself with those honors classes in freshman year, then you were almost rewarded with the opportunity to take that AP class…Sophomore year was the first year you could take an AP class. I took AP World History, which was pretty much the only one available. It’s kind of, you know, the little breaking point between all the kids.

The student referred to enrollment in AP World History as “the little breaking point,” suggesting a point of differentiation where the academic paths diverge, leading to a bifurcation of the student community into those who pursue dual credit courses and those who do not. This point of divergence underlies how a select group of students continually populate these advanced courses, further illustrating the implications of academic tracking. A junior student described it this way:

> What I find different compared to my regular classes, such as my English class, is that I don't know any of the kids. All of my friends and peers, we all took the same honors and AP classes. As I mentioned, we all have had the same classes, especially last year.

The student's observation that they do not recognize peers in regular classes, as opposed to honors or AP courses, highlights the formation of academic silos. In these advanced classes, students often share similar academic, social, or racial backgrounds, leading to tracking based not only on “ability” but also on social networks. This system shows the broader social and cultural impacts of academic separation within the school.

Furthermore, students enrolled in college preparatory courses, such as AP, experience marked academic stratification compared to those in non-dual credit courses. AP environments demand higher standards, largely due to the greater investment of teachers in these courses. For example, a senior student described his experience as follows:

> The teachers hold you to a completely different standard than in normal classes…In every normal class, when you're trying to teach something, sometimes you have to dumb it down for some of the [students] who aren't trying as hard. But when everyone in the [AP] classroom is trying, *and* the teacher is paid to give you the best information they can, it’s a different environment.

This suggests a disparity in educational rigor and teacher engagement across different types of classes, resulting in non-dual credit students receiving a diluted educational experience. Teachers in higher-expectation environments fundamentally altered classroom dynamics, enhancing the learning experience for those in more advanced courses.

In addition to operating under higher expectations, dual credit courses at Central High School adopted a proactive, college-oriented approach that offered extensive support for students. This included assistance with college applications and personalized guidance, elements typically absent from regular coursework. Instead of concentrating solely on high school issues, dual credit courses introduced college-related topics early, providing a continuum of learning that extends beyond high school. A junior student summed it up by saying:

> In regular classes, [teachers] talk more about what’s happening in high school, and you don’t really hear much about college. But in dual credit courses, it’s all about college; you’re earning college credit. The teachers constantly push you and tell you about ways they can help with your college applications and more. They really provide more support.

Consequently, educators varied their level of engagement and the resources they provided, depending on the course designation. College preparation opportunities were primarily offered in dual credit courses, indicating a systemic inconsistency in educational quality and access to rigorous academic support across different course tracks. More broadly, this discrepancy implies that students in dual credit courses were perceived as more deserving of access to postsecondary information and were typically considered college-bound.

In summary, Central High School provided unequal access and distribution of resources in the school's dual credit programs through academic tracking. Racial, gender, and linguistic disparities in dual credit course enrollments illuminate the systemic biases that impacted Latinx and Spanish-speaking students in AP and CTE courses. Institutional structures, such as course scheduling, exacerbated these inequities for emergent bilingual learners in particular. Additionally, as students reported, tracking started early and led to inadequate support and guidance in non-dual credit coursework, in contrast to the more robust, college-focused support offered in dual credit courses.

Part II: Legitimizing Inequities in Dual Credit Resources and Agency

This section examines how Central High School disseminated dual credit resources and how Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families reacted to organizational dynamics. I discuss how the school created unequal access to dual credit information through two organizational routines: normative parent engagement practices and racial and linguistic ideologies. I argue that these practices and biases not only legitimized the unequal distribution of resources but also diminished the agency of Latinx (im)migrant parents in making informed decisions about college preparation. For each routine, I detail the experiences of marginalization and exclusion felt by families. I posit that parents recognize these organizational practices and ideologies as racialized, intersecting with issues of language, immigration status, and labor, which shape their engagement and access to dual credit opportunities.

Normative Parent Engagement Practices

The school's normative involvement practices, which align with the dominant culture's expectations, norms, and behaviors, required Mexican (im)migrant parents to engage in activities sanctioned by the school organization. Examples of these school-approved activities included attending Open House events, using formal communication channels like ParentSquare and the school website, and knowing which questions to ask to access information and resources about dual credit opportunities. These taken-for-granted rules of engagement ultimately determined whether and how parents could access information and resources for college preparation.

School-Based Activities

Central High School expected parents to attend Open House and other informational events as the primary, legitimate means of accessing dual credit and college preparatory resources. For instance, when Latinx (im)migrant parents inquired about how to obtain information on dual credit, Lucía, the school's Migrant Staff Specialist, explained that:

Se ofrece una noche para que los padres vengan antes del inicio oficial del ciclo escolar, llamada Open House. Es una oportunidad para que los padres obtengan información sobre el doble crédito.	*There is a night offered for parents to come before the official start of the school year, called Open House. It's an opportunity for parents to obtain information about dual credit.*

By limiting the dissemination of information about dual credit programs to specific events like the Open House, the school restricted access to families who were already familiar with these resources. This model of involvement assumed that all parents have the availability and resources to attend such events. Several parents expressed being unaware of the need to attend Open House and similar events to learn about dual credit programs. Benito highlighted this issue by saying:

Nosotros no supimos de eso... no sabemos qué ofrece la escuela. Tal vez sea porque hay veces, muchas veces también, que no vamos a esos eventos por falta de tiempo.	*We didn't know about that... we don't know what the school offers. Maybe it's because there are times, often actually, that we don't go to those events due to lack of time.*

This model of parental involvement is rooted in assumptions that align with white, middle-class norms, disregarding how dynamics of race, class, culture, and language shape engagement. For instance, even if Mexican (im)migrant parents were to engage within these prescribed norms, the school was not prepared to adequately meet their linguistic needs. Lucía noted that the Open House event did not provide Spanish translation:

Este año tuvimos unos problemitas con lo de la traducción. Si Dios quiere, el año que viene será mejor. Al transcurso de este ciclo escolar, a ver si hay otras noches donde se ofrece algo similar, pero en este caso algo más pequeño en donde se puede dar más información	*This year we had some issues with the translation. God willing, next year will be better. Throughout this school year, let's see if there are other nights where something similar is offered, but in this instance something smaller where more information can be given.*

Although Lucía hoped that future events would handle translation better, the promise of improvement “next year” along with the idea of hosting more, but smaller events, carries a dual message: it signals the school's slow response to urgent needs for access and suggests that the problem lies in the scale of the events rather than addressing the systemic lack of language accessibility. The sporadic and insufficient translation services illustrate a power dynamic where the school controls access to information and determines how and when it is shared.

In other cases, Latinx (im)migrant families followed these white, middle-class practices, but did not receive support or understanding; instead, the school responded disparagingly to their efforts. Consequently, despite their active participation in school-sanctioned norms, they may not experience the same level of inclusion or recognition as their white counterparts. For instance, when Ximena tried to actively monitor her son’s progress, she described feeling judged by the counselor as overbearing rather than supportive:

> Mire, la verdad es que a veces siento vergüenza al decir que soy mamá. Antes siempre estaba al pendiente de mis hijos, en todo, en sus juntas. Es más, con mi hijo mayor, que ya tiene veintitrés años, cuando iba a la [Central] siempre estaba detrás de él. Precisamente con las becas, veía que dejaba los papeles en su cuarto, en la mesa. Yo los llevaba a la escuela o siempre estaba pendiente. Pero una vez, el director, más bien el consejero de la [Central], me cayó bien mal. Voy a decir esta palabra: 'gordo,' me cayó bien mal. Porque yo siempre estoy al pendiente de mi hijo, y que una vez el señor me dice: “¡No! Ellos tienen que ser responsables. Usted no tiene que andar viniendo.” El chiste es que se notaba que le

> *Look, the truth is that sometimes I feel ashamed to say that I am a mother. Before, I was always attentive to my children, in everything, in their meetings. What’s more, with my eldest son, who is now twenty-three years old, when he was at [Central], I was closely following his progress. Especially with scholarships, I would see that he left the paperwork in his room, on the table. I would take [the paperwork] to school or constantly check on it. But one day, the principal, or rather the counselor at [Central], really upset me. I'm going to say “he rubbed me the wrong way" to describe how I felt. Because I'm always looking out for my son, and then one time this man tells me: “No! They have to be responsible. You shouldn't be coming here.”*

molestaba que yo anduviera detrás, o sea, pues, yo me preocupaba por mi hijo. Y ya vi ahí como que yo sentí que empecé a perder el interés, y es más, no solo con [el mayor] sino con mis tres hijos.	*The thing is, it was obvious that it bothered him that I was following up; I mean, I was concerned about my son. And from that point on, I felt like I started to lose interest, not just with [my eldest] but with my other three children as well.*

Ximena recounts her dedication to her children's education, particularly her eldest son. She describes herself as a highly attentive parent who participated in her children's education, such as attending meetings and ensuring that scholarship paperwork was submitted on time. This level of involvement illustrates a deep commitment to her children's academic success, aligning with normative parental behaviors that are encouraged and valued within educational organizations. However, this expectation excluded Latinx (im)migrant parents, like Ximena, who diverged from white normativity. Despite her efforts, she encountered paternalistic condescension from a counselor, making her feel unwelcome and demoralized. Her involvement was seen as an intrusion, signaling that her presence as a Brown, (im)migrant parent did not belong in an organization that operated under white norms.

ParentSquare and School Websites

Central school staff also expected parents to engage with formal school communications to access information and resources about dual credit programs. With the transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the school adopted ParentSquare[21] as the primary communication tool to connect parents to students, teachers, and school leaders. Paloma, the Migrant Staff Specialist, emphasized this point to parents, saying:

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[21] ParentSquare is a communication and organization platform designed for schools and school districts to facilitate communication between educators, administrators, parents, and students. It offers a centralized place for announcements, messaging, event coordination, and sharing resources.

Una cosa que sí puede, y ya sé que [la escuela] quiere que los padres se inscriban en lo que se llama ParentSquare. No sé si ya haya visto por su correo electrónico o por texto que dice "Hey, que se manda esta información.” So, busque ese pa’ que entre en lo que se llama ParentSquare. por eso es donde están mandando toda la información [de doble crédito] a los padres.	*One thing that can be done, and I already know [the school] wants parents to enroll in what's called ParentSquare. I don't know if you've already seen it through your email or a text message that says "Hey, this information is being sent.” So look for that so that you can join ParentSquare. That's where they are sending all the [dual credit] information to parents.*

Despite the school’s implementation of ParentSquare as its main communication platform during the pandemic, many parents remained uninformed about this shift. When Paloma highlighted the advantages of joining ParentSquare for updates on school events and sessions on dual credit opportunities, it came as news to parents like Miguel Ángel. He *was* familiar, however, with other communication modes, such as the school and district's Facebook accounts. He explained to Paloma:

Miguel Ángel: Lo que sí tengo y estoy agregado es el link de la [Central] y el link del distrito. Entonces leo todo lo que suben ahí en las redes.	**Miguel Ángel**: *What I do have and I'm subscribed to is the [Central] link and the district link. So, I read everything they post on social media.*

Paloma: Pero no todo lo que suben en Facebook en [Central] sale. Ahí en lo de ParentSquare a veces sale más información, más aquí.	**Paloma**: *But not everything they post on Facebook about [Central] appears there. Sometimes, more information is posted on ParentSquare.*
Miguel Ángel: Bueno, me lo anotas.	**Miguel Ángel**: *Okay, write it down for me.*

This exchange demonstrates that Miguel Ángel was making an effort to stay informed and engaged by following the available platforms. His initiative in asking Paloma to write down the ParentSquare information further emphasizes his commitment to staying updated. However, the school's introduction of a new communication platform during a time of sudden change due to the pandemic inadvertently created a barrier for parents like Miguel Ángel. This highlights how even well-intentioned changes can unintentionally marginalize families who are already navigating complex systems and may not have the resources or knowledge to adapt quickly to new technologies or communication channels. The school's actions ultimately diminished the agency of Miguel and other parents in the sample to stay informed and make well-informed decisions about their children's education.

Parents contended that instead of relying on a single communication tool to distribute DC information and resources, the school should leverage existing channels. These were channels that Mexican (im)migrant families were already familiar with and able to access more easily. Parents felt that more traditional forms of communication, such as phone calls, could have helped to bridge the gap. Brenda Lizeth argued:

Pues, como te dije, pensé que por la pandemia pues ya no se hacían los eventos, pero digo la	*Well, as I said, I thought it was because of the pandemic that events weren't being held, but I*

información también la pueden hacer por teléfono y todo eso, pero yo siento que es falta de comunicación también.	*mean, they can also provide information over the phone and all that, but I feel like it's also a lack of communication.*

Additionally, parents suggested utilizing the school's communication platform, Skyward, to disseminate information. This platform, already used by parents and students to access grades, attendance, and schedules, could be leveraged to provide information about dual credit events. Miguel Ángel highlighted this possibility, stating:

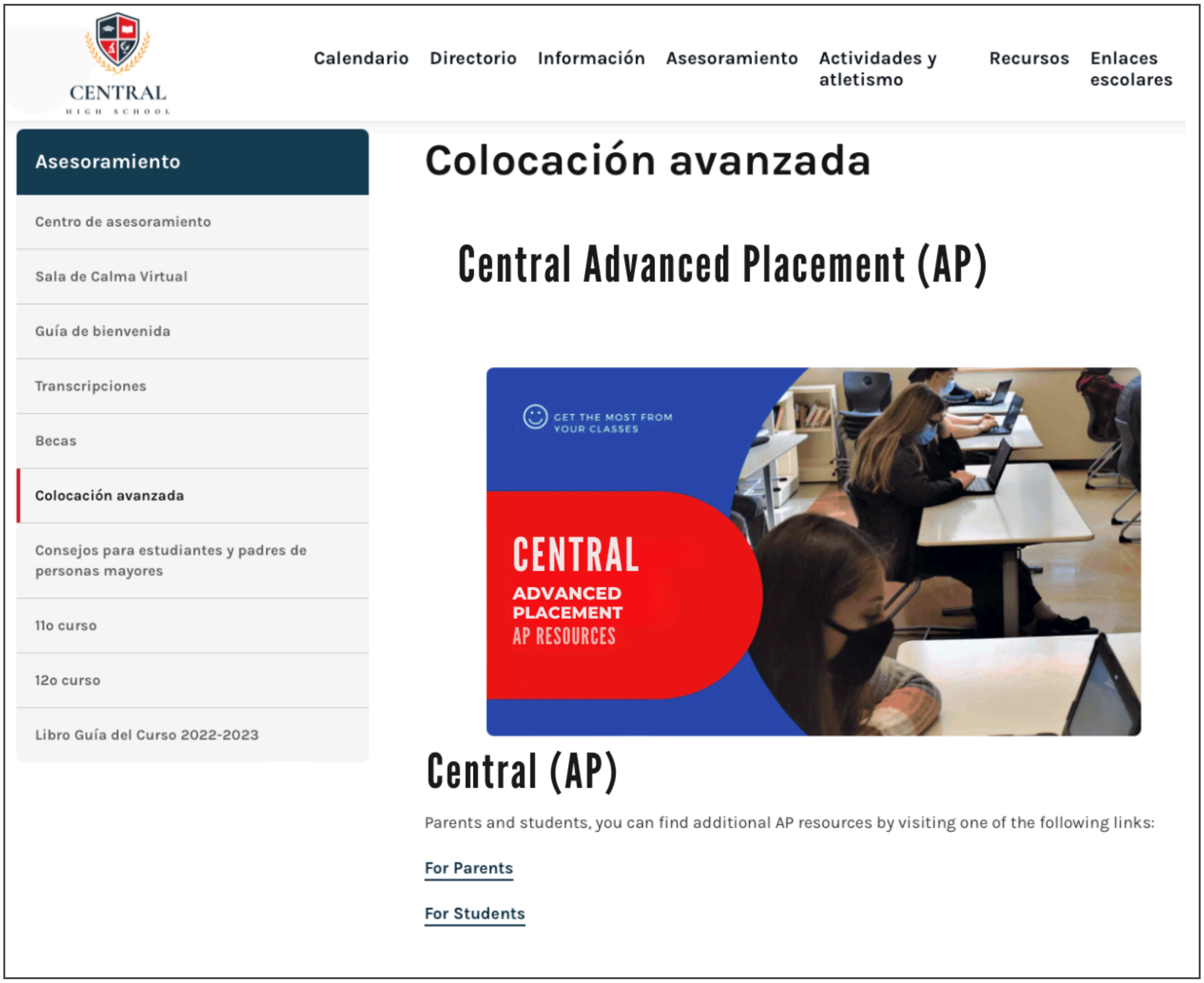
¿Por qué no mandan esa información sobre los cuatro tipos de doble crédito en [Skyward]? Así, el papá, que ya ves que también revisa las calificaciones en Skyward, abrirá las calificaciones cuando entre al portal, y ahí podrán ver los recursos e información.	*Why don't they share that information about the four types of dual credit in [Skyward]? That way, the parent, you see, checks the grades in Skyward, will open the grades when they access the portal, and there they can see the resources and information.*

These accounts illuminate that a one-size-fits-all approach did not address the diverse needs of the school community. The school's reliance on ParentSquare was rooted in the assumption that consolidated access to resources and information was more equitable but neglected the varied communication landscapes that families navigate. As a result, implementing new or less familiar practices without clear guidance led to resource exclusion.

In addition to ParentSquare, Central High School expected Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families to access information about dual credit opportunities through the school's website. However, as with the resources distributed at Open House, the school did not attend to the linguistic needs of non-English speaking families. Although the website was technically translated into Spanish via Google Translate (see Figure 12), the linked resources explaining these college-preparatory opportunities were only available in English. For instance, links to external sites like the College Board, which offers information about AP courses and their benefits, and the Running Start program were not translated into Spanish. Even internal website content regarding dual credit programs and staff contacts for further information was not translated by Google Translate and remained in English (see Figure 13). This automated translation provided only a superficial level of accessibility, as it failed to translate information about dual credit programs, including the benefits, enrollment processes, and key contacts at Central, vital for parents' understanding. School staff assumed that the mere presence of translation technology would suffice, without considering the quality and comprehensiveness of the translations.

Figure 12

Website Spanish Translation


CENTRAL
HIGH SCHOOL
Calendario
Directorio
Información
Asesoramiento
Actividades y atletismo
Recursos
Enlaces escolares
Asesoramiento
Centro de asesoramiento
Sala de Calma Virtual
Guía de bienvenida
Transcripciones
Becas
Colocación avanzada
Consejos para estudiantes y padres de personas mayores
11o curso
12o curso
Libro Guía del Curso 2022-2023
GET THE MOST FROM YOUR CLASSES
CENTRAL
ADVANCED PLACEMENT
AP RESOURCES
For Parents
For Students

Colocación avanzada

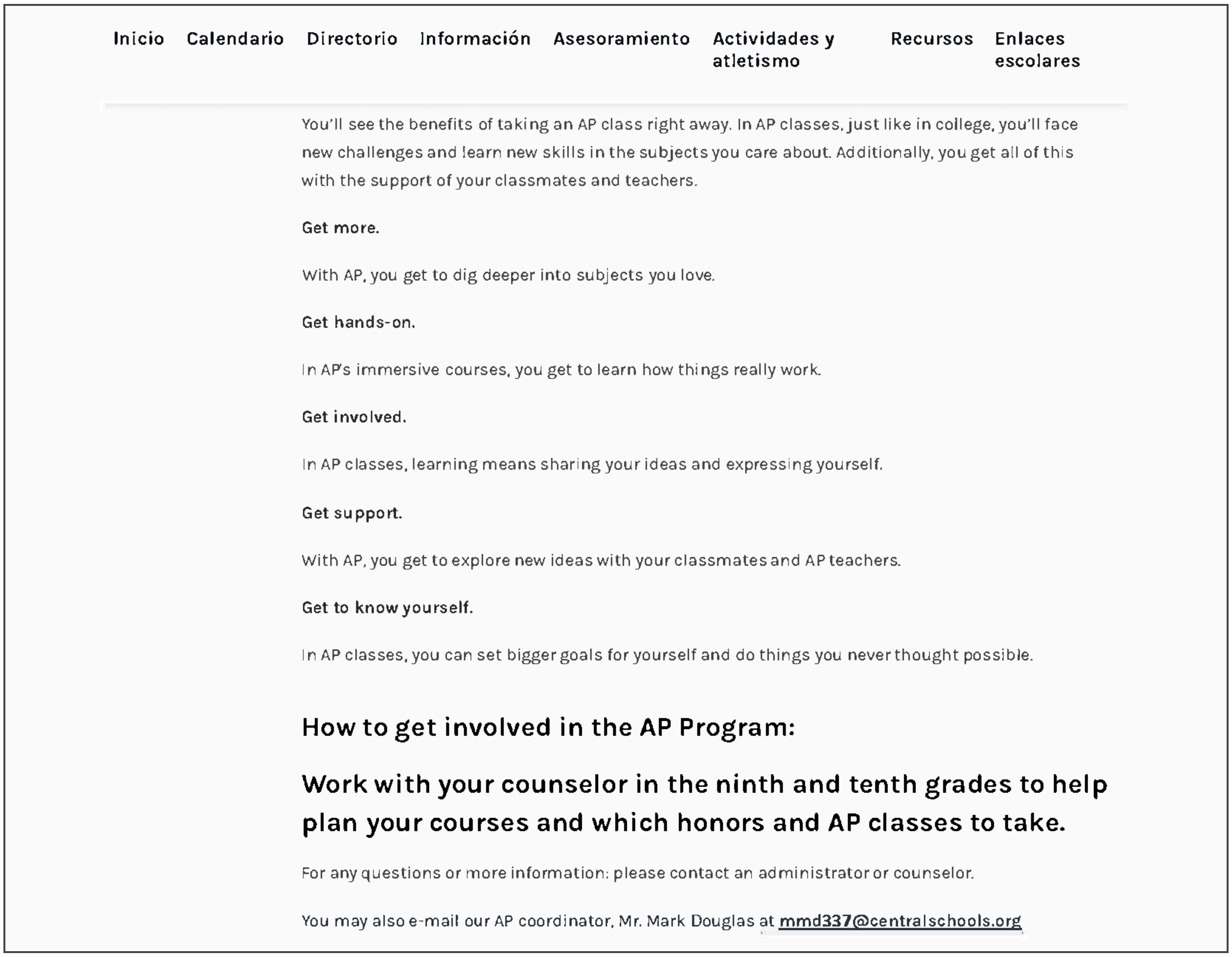
Central Advanced Placement (AP)

Central (AP)

Parents and students, you can find additional AP resources by visiting one of the following links:

Figure 13

Untranslated Website Content



You'll see the benefits of taking an AP class right away. In AP classes, just like in college, you'll face new challenges and learn new skills in the subjects you care about. Additionally, you get all of this with the support of your classmates and teachers.

Get more.

With AP, you get to dig deeper into subjects you love.

Get hands-on.

In AP's immersive courses, you get to learn how things really work.

Get involved.

In AP classes, learning means sharing your ideas and expressing yourself.

Get support.

With AP, you get to explore new ideas with your classmates and AP teachers.

Get to know yourself.

In AP classes, you can set bigger goals for yourself and do things you never thought possible.

How to get involved in the AP Program:

Work with your counselor in the ninth and tenth grades to help plan your courses and which honors and AP classes to take.

For any questions or more information: please contact an administrator or counselor.

You may also e-mail our AP coordinator, Mr. Mark Douglas at **mmd337@centralschools.org**

While the school provided limited access to dual credit information in Spanish, the school's rules and regulations, including disciplinary information, were fully translated into Spanish. Parents pointed out this discrepancy, noting that while the school communicated effectively about discipline, it failed to do so about college preparation. Magdalena noted this inconsistency:

Por ejemplo, me mandan un resumen diario, pero cuando voy a la página web, todo está en inglés. [Pero] o sea, me mandan por mensajes	*For example, they send me a daily summary, but when I go to the website, everything is in English. [But] I mean, they send me text*

de texto cuando [Carmen] falta, me mandan uno en español y otro en inglés.	*messages when [Carmen] is absent, they send one in Spanish and another in English.*

Magdalena's quote suggests that she feels undervalued and disregarded by the school. The school's prioritization of translating disciplinary communication into Spanish, while neglecting to translate information about college preparation, implies that the school is more concerned with controlling student behavior than supporting their academic aspirations. This sends a message to parents like Magdalena that their involvement in their children's academic success is not valued, whereas their adherence to school rules is. Central High School possessed the technology and protocols necessary for bilingual communication but employed these resources selectively. This selective approach reveals that the school prioritized compliance from Latinx students and families over providing information that could enhance their agency.

Organizational Script of "Asking"

Instead of school staff taking the initiative to reach out to families, they expected parents and their children to seek out support for dual credit information through the organizational script of asking. This script refers to the implicit and explicit guidelines and norms that dictate how families should request assistance and information. It includes the behaviors, communication styles, and procedural steps that school organizations anticipate from Latinx (im)migrant families when they need help understanding or accessing dual credit programs. This practice places the onus on parents and students to inquire about these opportunities and resources, even if they might be unaware of their existence. When parents questioned whether it was the teachers' responsibility to provide information about enrolling in dual credit, Lucía clarified that the expectation was the reverse:

> Para inscribirse, los estudiantes deben hablar con sus consejeros escolares, quienes organizan el horario de dónde deben de estar a tal hora y sus clases y todo eso. Ahí es donde pueden pedir más información y ver qué opciones hay… [Pero] no les dan mucho tiempo para poder cambiar su horario. Si hay algo que no les gusta, o algo que quieren o prefieren tomar otra clase diferente; es decir, sé que solo la primera semana del semestre se les da para hacer cambios, aproximadamente dos semanas les dan para cambiar de clases.

> *To enroll, students need to talk to their school counselors, who organize their schedule and classes and everything. That's where they are able to ask for more information and see what options are available…[But] they aren't given much time to change their schedules. If there's something they don't like or want or prefer to take a different class; that is, I know that they are only given the first week of the semester to make changes, about two weeks are given to switch classes.*

Lucía described a normative practice of engagement that assumes a level of prior knowledge and resource access. This includes knowing whom to contact, such as teachers and counselors, to learn about dual enrollment, as well as understanding the time frame for enrolling in such programs. Moreover, the expectation that students and parents initiate conversations about dual credit programs reveals a narrow understanding of the roles of educators and counselors in supporting student success. It suggests a transactional approach to education, where the onus of navigating the school’s bureaucratic structures falls on students and parents independently, rather than being a collaborative effort among all involved key partners.

Parents expressed the conundrum of this organizational script for students who are unaware of these accelerated college preparatory programs. Specifically, they questioned how students can be expected to initiate conversations about dual credit opportunities when they are not even aware these options exist. Ana Xochi explained it this way:

> Lo poquito que me cuenta mi niña es que la maestra solo le decía: “Ustedes tienen que preguntarme lo que quieren saber, y yo les digo. Si no, no tengo la obligación de decirles.” Entonces, como ellos no saben definitivamente sobre los programas [de doble crédito] o todo lo que tienen, ¿qué pueden preguntar? Ni siquiera van a saber qué es lo que pueden preguntar; nuestros niños no tienen la confianza para hacerlo.

> *The little that my daughter tells me is that the teacher would only say, “You have to ask me what you want to know, and I will tell you. Otherwise, I'm not obligated to tell you.” So, since they definitely don't know about [dual credit] programs or everything available to them, what can they ask? They won't even know what they can ask; our children don't have the trust to do so.*

Ana Xochi's insight about the lack of trust between Latinx youth and teachers at Central High School reveals deeper issues related to power and relational dynamics within the school. The expectation that students initiate conversations about dual credit, even when unaware of such opportunities, demonstrates a disregard for the knowledge gap experienced by many students, particularly nondominant youth. By expecting students to unilaterally seek out teachers for support on dual credit opportunities, teachers shifted the responsibility of resource-seeking onto the students. For Latinx youth to engage in the organizational script of asking, they need to feel they have a trusting, two-way relationship with their teachers, rather than a one-way, transactional relationship characterized by attitudes like “I'm not obligated to tell you.” Without this trust, access to information remains limited to students who are already informed, conform to normative behaviors, or have accepted one-way relationships with the staff. This approach undermines the educational principle that teachers should act as guides and facilitators of knowledge, thereby perpetuating inequity within the school.

Parents perceived that they, like their children, were also expected to follow the script of asking. If they did not adhere to this organizational behavior, the school would not provide them with information and resources about dual credit programs. For example, when I asked parents why they thought no one from the school had informed them about these opportunities, several speculated it was because they had not inquired about them. Lupita highlighted this issue:

Tal vez porque los papás no nos acercamos [al personal de Central] a hacer preguntas … [pero] ¿cómo voy a preguntar de algo que no sé?	*Maybe because parents don't approach [Central staff] to ask questions... [but] how am I going to ask about something that I don't know?*

Lupita's response reveals the frustration felt by many Latinx (im)migrant parents due to the school's reliance on the organizational script of asking. Lupita's rhetorical question, "*How am I going to ask about something that I don't know*?" highlights the absurdity of this expectation, as it assumes that parents already possess the institutional knowledge they are seeking. Magdalena likened the dynamics in schools to her experiences in *bodegas*, where farmworkers are often kept uninformed about available resources. She explained:

Si, también es como los trabajos. Osea si [mayordomos] no le dan la información, pues uno no va a saber cuáles son las ayudas que tienen	*Yes, it's similar to jobs, too. I mean, if [foremen] don't give you the information, then you won't know what kind of help is available.*

This comparison illuminates the similar power dynamics in both settings, where those who hold information have control over what is disseminated and what is withheld.

Parents also expressed that, as (im)migrant families navigating the complexities of U.S. institutions and being first-generation themselves, they did not possess the same accumulated, dominant resources as white families familiar with postsecondary preparation. Consequently, parents believed that expecting them to engage in the same manner—such as actively seeking clarification or asking about programs—was inequitable. Ana Xochi highlighted this concern:

Casi la mayoría de nosotros no estuvimos en la escuela aquí [en los E.E.U.U], entonces no sabemos lo suficiente como para ayudar a los jóvenes. Y creo que para la comunidad blanca, claro que sí, ellos crecieron aquí, se graduaron y ya tienen sus hijos, es decir, saben más de cómo preguntar para sus hijos.	*Almost most of us didn't attend school here [in the U.S.], so we don't know enough to help young people. And I think that for the white community, yes, they grew up here, graduated, and now have their children, that is, they know more about how to ask for their children.*

Ana Xochi's insights shed light on the privileges associated with whiteness within educational organizations. She contrasts her own experience as an immigrant parent with that of white parents who, having been through the U.S.school system themselves, possess not only institutional familiarity but also accumulated, generational social and cultural capital. This capital includes an implicit understanding of the system, the confidence to question and seek clarifications, and a network of informed individuals who can guide and advocate for their children's education in ways school organizations value.

Even when Mexican (im)migrant families adhered to the school's expected “script of asking,” their concerns about college preparation were often dismissed. Parents recounted instances where, upon inquiring about scholarships, teachers delayed providing information and resources. For example, Brenda Lizeth shared her experience when she asked a teacher at parent-teacher conferences about scholarships for her 10th-grade son Noé:

> Lo único que estoy preocupada es cómo saber, cómo poder obtener las becas para que [Noé] vaya al colegio. Esto es lo que a mí me preocupa porque no tengo información de eso… en cada conferencia que hay siempre le pregunto a una maestra [sobre eso], pero siempre me dice: "Oh, en el 11 grado ya le vamos a poder explicar más." Y así me quedo y ya digo: “Bueno, pues entonces nos esperamos hasta el 11 grado.”

> *The only thing I'm worried about is how to find out, how to obtain scholarships for [Noé] to go to college. This is what concerns me because I don't have any information about that... At every conference, I always ask a teacher [about it], but they always tell me: “Oh, in 11th grade we'll be able to explain more.” So I'm left like that, and then I think: “Well, then we'll wait until the 11th grade.”*

Brenda Lizeth demonstrates initiative in normative engagement by asking teachers at every conference about college preparatory resources—a behavior that is valued in schools. However, the response she receives is often dismissive, with educators indicating that detailed information will be available starting in the 11th grade. This delay in providing pertinent information about higher education implicitly suggests that the pursuit of postsecondary education is not an immediate concern for families. While the school might justify this practice due to resource constraints and the need to prioritize college preparation for upperclassmen, it ultimately perpetuates inequity by denying Latinx immigrant families the same opportunities for early preparation afforded to their more privileged counterparts. As noted by Ana Xochi and other parents, white families possess accumulated cultural and social capital that gives them an advantage in navigating the educational system. Even if unintentional, this practice marginalizes

Latinx (im)migrant families by delaying access to critical information and diminishing their agency in shaping their children's educational futures.

In other instances, when parents sought guidance to help their undocumented children prepare for postsecondary education, they found the school unhelpful. Parents inquired about available postsecondary information and opportunities for undocumented students—they wanted data on the college trajectories of Central's undocumented and DACA[22]-recipients. Miguel Ángel expressed his frustration upon learning from Paloma, the Migrant Staff Specialist, that Central did not collect this data, despite gathering information based on other student demographics:

> Lo que a mí me hacía ruido era [que] no existe una relación o base de datos de qué universidades aceptan a estudiantes [indocumentados]. ¿Dónde está? Yo pensaba, "Bueno, no es la primera generación [de jóvenes indocumentados] que va a salir." ¿Qué pasó desde DACA hasta ahora? ¿Dónde están esos alumnos? Me preguntaba porque mi niña está estresada, está preocupada. Es simplemente tener estas hojas [de datos], estas carpetas, folders, decirles a los papás "esto es para los papás" o citar a los papás decir

> *What bothered me was [that] there was no relationship or database of which universities accept [undocumented] students. Where is it? I thought, "Well, this is not the first generation [of undocumented youth] to graduate. "What has happened from DACA until now? Where are those students? I wondered because my daughter is stressed, she's worried. It's simply about having these [data] sheets, telling parents "this is for parents" or calling parents to say "folks, these are the schools for you."*

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[22] Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a U.S. immigration policy established in 2012 that allows certain undocumented individuals who were brought to the United States as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit. DACA recipients, also known as "Dreamers," must meet specific requirements, including having entered the U.S. before their 16th birthday and meeting certain educational or military service criteria.

"señores, estas escuelas son las que son para
ustedes.

Miguel Ángel's concerns highlight the gaps in institutional support, communication, and resource availability, which contribute to the stress and uncertainty experienced by undocumented students and their parents. He points out that his daughter's situation is not singular; Central has had cohorts of undocumented students graduate before. His rhetorical questions highlight the school's failure to build on past experiences and create a sustainable support system for undocumented students. Without collecting or sharing such data, it diminishes parents' agency to support and advocate for their children's college preparation. Parents argued that understanding the experiences and outcomes of past DACA students can guide current and future students in navigating similar paths. Moreover, access to disaggregated data on the postsecondary trajectories and trends of previous DACA students would have supported Miguel and other Mexican (im)migrant families to make informed decisions about which colleges or universities best align with their student's needs and circumstances, thereby addressing and challenging broader educational inequities.

Racial and (Im)migrant Ideologies

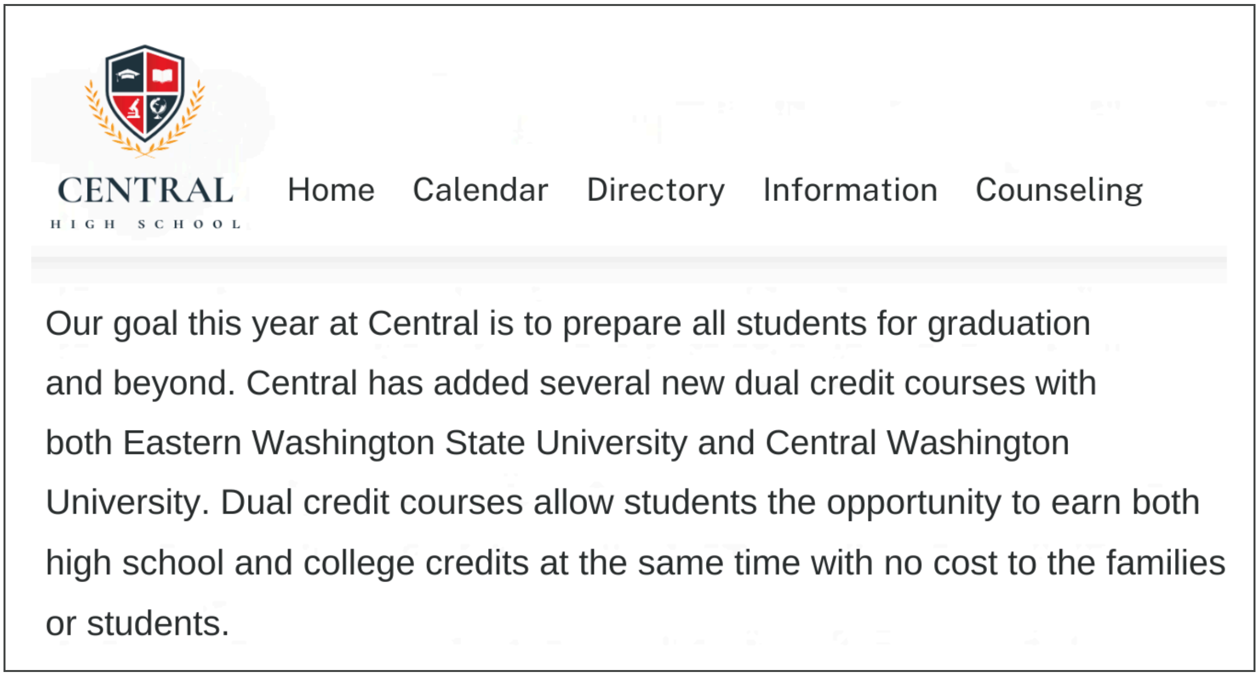
At Central High School, ideologies held by staff about Latinx (im)migrant families led to unequal access to dual credit opportunities and resources. First, these ideologies shaped teachers' perceptions of student ability, affecting their decisions to recommend Latinx students for rigorous dual credit courses. Secondly, these deficit perceptions led teachers to offer more support to students enrolled in dual credit courses, viewing them as more likely to be college-bound and thus more deserving of information on higher education pathways. Lastly, these racial biases influenced the access to information parents receive about dual credit programs, while portraying them as disengaged from their children's education.

Inequitable Dual Credit Access

Central High School's website prominently states its goal to prepare every student for graduation and beyond, highlighting new dual credit programs developed in partnership with universities across Washington (see Figure 14). However, in practice, access to these college preparatory courses was influenced by underlying ideologies that determined which students could participate. Observational data revealed that some teachers held deficit views about students' capabilities and motivation to engage in dual credit programs. During staff meetings, teachers made comments such as, "*It's not the dual credit course that will determine their willingness to obtain a postsecondary education*," suggesting a belief that certain students inherently lack the motivation or capability to succeed, regardless of the support or opportunities provided by dual credit programs. Other comments like, "*It's a hard culture and mindset to change...It's a big question and task*," imply that students' cultural backgrounds and existing attitudes are seen as obstacles to their academic success, rather than recognizing systemic issues like academic tracking. The underlying assumption is that Latinx (im)migrant youth and their families need "fixing" rather than addressing the inequities within school structures. They are perceived as culturally deficient, leading to the belief that a dual credit course will not influence their willingness to pursue higher education, and that changing their culture is a "big task." These comments illustrate that staff did not hold equal aspirations and expectations for all students to attend postsecondary institutions.

Figure 14

Principal's Message on the School Website



Our goal this year at Central is to prepare all students for graduation and beyond. Central has added several new dual credit courses with both Eastern Washington State University and Central Washington University. Dual credit courses allow students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits at the same time with no cost to the families or students.

Substantiating the observational data, Becker, the College and Career Specialist, acknowledged that the deficit attitudes among staff contributed to systemic bias and racism in dual credit opportunities for Latinx students. He remarked:

> It's really some kind of systemic bias and racism...We need to break the mold of many of our counselors and individuals who have been here for 20-25 years and, you know, have contributed to this problem.

Becker highlighted that counselors and long-tenured staff, who have significant influence over students' academic paths and access to opportunities, were part of the issue. Their long-standing presence and entrenched attitudes have perpetuated low expectations and unequal access for Latinx students. He further observed that staff often channel Latinx students into lower-level CTE programs, viewing these courses as repositories for students who are “not successful” in other dual credit courses:

> I hate to say it, but a lot of our CTE teachers do say that CTE is just a dumping ground. They say, “Let's just put the kids here. They're generally not successful in other courses.

Becker underscores the existing biases that educators hold about the potential of Latinx students in dual credit programs outside of vocational training. While teachers often assert that they guide students to dual credit courses by recommending CTE programs, Becker points out that even within these programs, the quality of training and skills provided can differ considerably. These course enrollment decisions are influenced more by teachers' preconceived notions than by the students' interests, further reinforcing racial hierarchies within the educational system.

Considering that over three-fourths of the student body was Latinx, contrasting with a predominantly white teaching staff, parents expressed concerns about potential racial biases. They believed these biases influenced teachers' perceptions of Latinx students and their decisions on whether to recommend these students for more rigorous dual credit courses. Despite their children's strong academic performance, parents observed a lack of recognition and encouragement from teachers for their children to enroll in advanced courses. For instance, Ana Xochi offered her insights on this issue:

Los maestros veían que [mi hija] tenía buenos grados, pero aun así, no lo reconocían y no la motivaban... Y [los estudiantes] dicen que “de nada sirve tener buenos grados si, al final, estoy igual y no avanzo a otra clase”, como por ejemplo, a una clase avanzada. Nunca vi a mi hija en una clase así, a pesar de sus buenos grados; nunca [los maestros] hablaron de eso.	*The teachers saw that [my daughter] had good grades, but even so, they did not acknowledge it and did not motivate her... And [students] say that “there's no point in having good grades if, in the end, I'm in the same situation and don't move on to another class”, like, for example, an advanced class. I never saw my daughter in such a class, despite her good grades; [teachers] never spoke to her about it.*

Ana Xochi felt that teachers had lowered expectations for her daughter, because they never invited her to take dual credit, despite her good grades. Ana Xochi perceived that this lack of investment from teachers not only restricted her child's access to dual credit classes but also gradually diminished her motivation in school. When Latinx students perceive that their efforts are not acknowledged or rewarded, it fosters a sense of futility in their academic striving, which can negatively affect their long-term educational goals.

Parents surmised that the racial and linguistic biases teachers had towards their Mexican (im)migrant children arose from a lack of meaningful relationships between white educators and Students of Color. The result was a reduced sharing of dual credit knowledge, as Miguel Ángel explained:

> No sé si entre por ahí, si me apuras un poquito, diría, [los maestros piensan] "caray, yo doy clases a puro latino, pero veo que no hay esa química, esa engrane para yo transmitirles, "mirar por este lado hay estos beneficios para ustedes.." Yo no sé si hay un celo de información que le baje a los estudiantes latinos todo este conocimiento para que ellos puedan aprovechar.

> *I don't know if it's relevant, but if you press me a bit, I'd say, [teachers think] "Gosh, I teach purely Latino students, but I see there's no chemistry, no connection for me to convey, "look in this pathway there are these benefits for you…" I'm not sure if there's a deliberate withholding of information that diminishes the knowledge passed on to Latino students for them to take advantage of.*

He alluded to what he saw as a lack of relational dynamics between white educators and Latinx youth, noting that there is "no chemistry" or "no connection" for meaningful teaching. Miguel suspected that, without that connection, teachers may have withheld information, even intentionally. This disconnect indicates that without strong teacher-student relationships, educators may reinforce and act on racial and linguistic beliefs against Latinx youth. This leads to unequal access and gatekeeping of information for dual credit programs, diminishing youth's agency in current academic decision-making and, by extension, subsequent postsecondary educational decisions.

Differential Teacher Support and Dual Credit Resource Sharing

The same ideologies that limited Latinx students' access to dual credit programs were also used to justify differential teacher support. Students at Central High School had already noticed the differences in rigor and support between dual credit and non-dual credit programs, and observational data corroborated these experiences. In staff meetings, such differences were often reflected in teacher attitudes and statements. Comments like, "*Students who are taking AP and [dual credit] are students who are already excelling, so they are more likely or motivated to go to college*" and "*Not every student is geared towards higher education*" exemplify this mindset, legitimizing unequal allocation of resources and support to students who are deemed academically superior.

Parents also recognized that there was an inequity in the level of support offered to students based on their enrollment in dual credit courses. They indicated that students in dual credit programs received more comprehensive guidance, exposure to information about postsecondary education, and engagement in conversations about higher education opportunities. The operating logic, they believed, was that students enrolled in dual credit courses were viewed as college-bound, suggesting a predilection for guiding a certain subset of students more rigorously towards higher education pathways. Magdalena, for example, noted:

Los que están inscritos en esos créditos, pues claro que [los maestros] van a brindar más	*Those who are enrolled in those credits, of course teachers will provide more support to*

apoyo a esos estudiantes, ¡porque los maestros piensan que quieren ir a un colegio o universidad!	*those students, because teachers think that they want to attend college or university*!

Magdalena perceives a bias in the school's support system, where students enrolled in dual credit programs receive preferential treatment. In these programs, teachers assume that students have higher aspirations and greater potential for academic success. Teachers allocate their time, resources, and attention disproportionately to DC students. Unlike the normative expectation that students must seek resources, teachers in dual credit courses *willingly* provide additional information and support for postsecondary options. As a result, these students receive proactive information about postsecondary requirements, bypassing the organizational script of having to "ask" for such guidance.

In addition to the differing levels of teacher support influenced by racial and linguistic ideologies, there was also uneven sharing of dual credit resources. Several educators expressed surprise that Latinx (im)migrant parents were not familiar with the requirements for enrolling in a dual credit academic track. During a staff meeting, Becker presented data highlighting the disparities in Central's dual credit course enrollment based on race, language, and gender. Staff discussed their perceptions of these inequities and suggested that part of the problem was due to communication gaps with Latinx, Spanish-speaking parents. They shared observations such as, "*We've had these parents indicate that they didn't realize students couldn't get into the [dual credit] track if it wasn't what they started*." Such comments underlie the assumption that information about dual credit programs is easily accessible to all interested parents through normative school practices. If parents participate in activities like Open House, navigate ParentSquare, or seek out resources, they would be aware of the process. Essentially, these sentiments carry a deficit perspective, implying that inequities exist because some families do not adhere to the racialized norms for engagement.

Parents, contrarily, perceived that unequal access to information about dual credit opportunities may be impacted by deficit views of (im)migrant families. For instance, Mireya felt that she and her daughter, Itatí, were not informed about dual credit programs due to their undocumented and migrant status:

Pues a lo mejor es porque vamos entrando ahí a esa escuela y otra [razón] también porque como dice mi niña, porque ella no es ciudadana, a lo mejor por eso también no nos han dado información	*Well, maybe it's because we're just starting at that school and another [reason] is also because, as my daughter says, she is not a citizen, maybe that's why they haven't given us any information*

Mireya wondered whether teachers and other school staff had not provided information because of her daughter's immigration status. This perception aligns with other parents' observations that the school did not prioritize support systems for undocumented/DACA students and their families to learn about postsecondary options. Mireya also suggested that her status as a migrant and her late entry into Central High School, in the middle of an academic year, further limited her access to information. This concern was supported by the fact that the main event where the school disseminated details about college preparatory coursework to parents was their Open House at the start of the school year.

Mexican (im)migrant farmworker parents, furthermore, felt the school used racial and linguistic ideologies to cast them as "disengaged" and "disinterested" in their children's education, thus legitimizing the unequal distribution of dual credit opportunities. For example, when asked why no one from Central High School had provided information about these opportunities, parents like Magdalena speculated:

Tal vez [el personal de la escuela] piensan que uno no está interesado en eso, en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes, en los hijos	*Maybe [school staff] think that we are not interested in that, in our students' learning, in our children.*

This assumption did not align with reality. One platica with Lupita in her home highlighted the love and care that Latinx (im)migrant families have for their children and their education. Initially, Lupita was not sure if her eldest son, Ramón, was participating in any dual credit courses at Central High School. Once I described the various dual credit options available, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses like welding, she recalled that Ramón was taking a welding class, though she was unsure if it was part of the CTE program. At that moment, she proceeded to show me Ramón's welding projects, her pride evident as she excitedly pointed out each piece throughout her house. Among the showcased artworks was a stunning glass flower of purple and violet hues, beautifully crafted and displayed on the living room coffee table. She held it up, admiring the delicate details and the way the light caught the colors. “Mi hijo hizo esto para mí,” (“*My son made this for me*”) she said, her voice filled with admiration. She continued to show more of his work, each piece more intricate than the last, including a colorful cazuela (pan) and a vibrant blue and orange napkin holder. All the while, Ramón sat quietly listening as she talked about his work, a small smile on his face. It was evident that much love and care had gone into each piece, and it was clear that Lupita deeply cared about her son's education. This account is a reminder of the expansive ways culturally and linguistically diverse families engage with and support the education of their children, challenging the narrow and white normative views of organizational involvement.

In conclusion, normative practices and ideologies within Central High School reproduced inequitable access to dual credit resources and information for Mexican (im)migrant farmworker parents and their children. White normative practices that were considered the legitimate means of accessing dual credit resources, such as attending Open House and asking for information, often limited access. Even when families engaged in these prescribed ways, they encountered dismissiveness or exclusion that undermined their agency to make informed decisions about college preparation. The school staff's racial ideologies about (im)migrant families exacerbate the inequitable access to dual credit opportunities. Consequently, these deficit assumptions portrayed parents as uninvolved and disinterested in their children's education, further legitimizing the unequal distribution of resources.

Part III: Latinx (Im)migrant Families as Agentic Knowers

This section explores strategies proposed by Latinx immigrant families to equalize dual credit opportunities. By leveraging their experiential and cultural knowledge, parents offered strategies to reshape and renegotiate normative practices for equitable access to college preparatory programs, and ultimately, towards the de-racialization of school organizations. These recommendations included relational approaches that can disrupt deficit ideologies about them and their children. This section illuminates how, despite being in racialized organizations that diminish agency, Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families are agentic knowers and contributors to the discourse on educational equity.

Experiential Strategies for Dual Credit Access

In navigating school involvement within Central High School, Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families revealed settled organizational practices and expectations that reproduced racial and linguistic disparities in accessing information about dual credit programs. Despite these challenges, they recognized the potential for change within the school organization. They proposed four strategies to improve engagement and access: implementing grade-level advisories for early exposure to dual credit and college preparation, creating peer-led initiatives that leverage youth as experts, offering targeted professional development for staff, and enhancing communication for distributing dual credit resources. For each recommendation, I outline the strategy and then discuss the responses from school leadership and staff, highlighting how open communication fosters more nuanced approaches to organizational changes.

Grade-Level Advisory for Early Exposure

Parents voiced concerns that Central High School delayed informing students about dual credit opportunities and often introduced postsecondary requirements too late, primarily targeting higher grade levels. They argued that this delay complicated the decision-making process for both parents and students regarding educational paths during and beyond high school. As a solution, they proposed implementing a school-wide advisory system. Such a system would provide students of all grade levels and their families with comprehensive information on the advantages of and options for dual credit programs. Additionally, it would offer guidance on planning for higher education, thereby eliminating the need for families to seek out this information independently. Ana Xochi articulated this recommendation to Central staff:

> Una de nuestras recomendaciones es tener asesoramiento para estudiantes de todos los grados, que incluya currículo y recursos para prepararlos para la universidad, para una carrera técnica, o para que conozcan más sobre el costo de la universidad y lo que les

> *One of our recommendations is to provide advisory for students of all grades, which includes curriculum and resources to prepare them for university, for a technical career, or to learn more about the cost of university and what awaits them there, or what they need to*

espera allí, o lo que necesitan saber para dar ese paso. La razón es que tengo dos hijas en la escuela secundaria, y una de ellas se va a graduar este año sin haber tomado clases de doble crédito porque no preguntó o no tuvo suficiente información. Creo que esto ayudaría mucho a otros estudiantes más jóvenes que son tímidos y no preguntan. Además, sería muy beneficioso para nosotros, los padres, que no sabemos cómo ayudar a nuestros hijos y tenemos más niños pequeños que aún necesitan ir a la escuela.	*know to take that step. The reason is that I have two daughters in high school, and one of them is going to graduate this year without having taken dual credit classes because she did not ask or did not have enough information. I believe this would greatly help other younger students who are shy and do not ask. Moreover, it would be very beneficial for us, the parents, who do not know how to help our children and have more young children who still need to go to school.*

This recommendation would not only provide early exposure to dual credit and postsecondary education options for students and families but also address a relational issue at Central High School. Parents further described that establishing an advisory program for all grade levels, beginning in the freshman year, would foster a sense of *confianza* or trust encouraging youth to approach teachers for support in learning about dual credit and postsecondary pathways. Ana Xoxhi added this point:

El primer año que entran en la high school es como para darles todo, es decir, toda la información o todo lo que se espera de ellos al entrar allí. Y esa misma información les dará	*The first year they enter high school is the time to give them everything, that is, all the information or everything that is expected of them upon entering. And that very*

la confianza para hacer preguntas, porque ya sabrán sobre qué preguntar.	*information will give them the confianza to ask questions because they will already know what to ask.*

They outlined a process that could enhance their youth's participation in the organizational script of asking while at the same time cultivating relational dynamics. This approach involved providing incoming students with comprehensive information about dual credit and other postsecondary pathways as soon as they begin high school. Armed with this knowledge early on would nurture the *confianza* — trust and confidence — to ask teachers about dual credit and postsecondary education requirements. The increased student engagement and inquiry would lead to more meaningful interactions with teachers, thereby strengthening teacher-student relationships. With a strong support system and a clear understanding of their options, students would be better prepared to make decisions about their postsecondary education.

School Leaders Respond to Parent Insights. The reactions from Central High School leaders affirmed the value of family engagement in educational decision-making. In agreement with parents' suggestions to offer grade-specific resources on dual credit and postsecondary planning, school leaders emphasized their collaboration with the College Success Foundation (CSF). Crystal Fuentes, CSF's Family Engagement Specialist, shared that they are currently extending their focus from 12th graders to include students as early as the 8th grade. This shift recognizes the significance of early intervention in postsecondary preparation. She asserted:

Estoy muy emocionada solo de saber que tenemos estas familias dispuestas y	*I'm very excited just knowing that we have these families willing and available to give us*

disponibles para darnos su opinión, qué es lo que más cuenta en esta reunión. Les agradezco de corazón. Por eso estamos aquí…queremos que los niños estén preparados para el colegio, no solo los de grado 12, sino que ahora estaremos enfocándonos desde el grado ocho, nueve, diez, y once.	*their opinions, which is what matters most in this meeting. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. That's why we are here... we want the children to be prepared for college, not only the 12th graders but now we will be focusing on 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th grades.*

Reid Becker, the school's College and Career Specialist, further clarified the school's response to parent feedback. He explained that through the CSF's Rally for College[23] initiative, Central High School aimed to address concerns about the delayed exposure to dual credit and postsecondary resources, especially for freshmen and sophomores. He elaborated:

> One of the awesome things between this project and our partnership with more College Success Foundation representatives is that Mr. [Eduardo Castañeda] and Miss [Andrea Solis], who are in this meeting, will primarily work with our younger students in 9th and 10th grade. They will also guide students on choosing dual credit courses that will lead them into college. We also have Miss [Anitta Saldaña] and Miss [Chema Jiménez], who are primarily working with our 11th and 12th graders on college applications, scholarships, financial aid, and more. Due to our expanding team, we're definitely able to reach much more students than we previously were.

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[23] "Rally for College," an initiative led by the College Success Foundation, provides students across all grade levels with skills and knowledge to enhance their high school experience and readiness for college, offering early support to ensure they possess the tools and guidance for success in higher education.

This collaboration introduces a two-pronged approach where designated staff provide grade-specific support. Specifically, 9th and 10th graders will receive mentoring and guidance on selecting dual credit courses and understanding how these courses connect to postsecondary education. The objective is that by the time students reach 11th and 12th grade, they will have established a robust foundation in college and career preparation, enabling them to approach more complex processes like college applications, scholarship searches, and financial aid with greater confidence and understanding. This strategy aligns with and addresses many of the needs identified by parents.

Peer-Led Initiatives: Ánimo and Testimonios

Parents claimed that although dual credit programs offered substantial benefits, the role of cultural practices such as *animar*, or motivation from both familial and organizational school environments, was critical in maximizing these opportunities for students. In other words, access to dual credit programs was not only contingent on the availability of such courses but also on a supportive ecosystem that included peers who could provide *ánimo*. Ximena expanded on this idea, explaining:

Sería muy bonito y beneficioso que, por ejemplo, los estudiantes que logren cursar esos programas de doble crédito y luego continúen en la universidad, regresen a medio camino de sus estudios, o en un momento determinado, para compartir su experiencia. Sería inspirador que ofrecieran su consejo, visitando escuelas como [Central], y	*It would be very beautiful and beneficial if, for example, students who excel in taking those dual credit programs and then continue to the university could return halfway through their studies, or at a specific moment, to share their experience. It would be inspiring if they offered their sociocultural wisdom, visited schools like [Central], and shared their*

compartieran su testimonio para animar a otros estudiantes. ¿Me entiende? Sí, para motivar a los estudiantes que están ahí, buscar cómo buscar métodos, formas en las que nuestros hijos fueran en cierta manera animados tanto por los maestros y hasta los mismos estudiantes que ya están mucho más adelantados.	*testimony to motivate other students. Do you see what I mean? In this way, we can motivate current students by exploring methods and strategies in which our children could be animados by teachers and even peers who are much further along.*

Parents asserted that inviting former dual credit students who had successfully transitioned to postsecondary education to return and share their insights at Central High School could be a powerful tool for motivation. This proposal expands the conventional academic support framework to include peer and near-peer influences, underlining the value of sociocultural wisdom. It calls for a shift from a deficit-oriented approach, where minoritized students are often seen as needing to be fixed, to a resource-oriented approach that leverages the strengths in Latinx (im)migrant communities. This includes offering ánimo to enhance understanding of dual credit programs and their connection to higher education.

Furthermore, parents emphasized that peer-led initiatives could also bring to the forefront the importance of maintaining high aspirations despite the challenges posed by the realities of racialized immigrant labor. They argued that for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families and students, higher education was seen as a liberatory means to expand opportunities beyond the exploitative conditions of agricultural wage labor. By sharing testimonios and experiences, peers could illustrate the significance of continuing to postsecondary education. Miguel Ángel elaborated on this point, explaining:

Entonces son testimonios reales y en este caso sale una brigada de [estudiantes] que está viviendo o vivió todo este proceso…Un estadounidense, un anglosajón, tiene obviamente los beneficios, todo, a comparación del latinoamericano, del hispano. El estado de Washington es sumamente de agricultura. Pero la gente, ahora así que la tropa, la gente raza, de a pie, es el latino, es el hispano. Este, el hijo [Latino] ve cómo su papá trabaja de sol a sol y obviamente él quiere superarse, no quiere verse ahí, y su papá que le dice "échale ganas, estudia, no te quiero ver aquí como yo desvelándome o amañándome, mira cómo llego todo sucio, todo cansado." En cambio, un hijo gabacho que dice "no, al cabo y ahí está mi papá, tiene todos los beneficios, como quiera me acomodo ahí donde el anda trabajando." Sus aspiraciones a lo mejor son

So, these are real testimonies and it's like a brigade of [students] who are experiencing or have experienced this whole process... An American, an Anglo-Saxon, obviously has more benefits compared to a Latin American, a Hispanic. Washington State is predominantly agricultural. But the real workforce, the rank and file, are Latinos, Hispanics. The [Latino] son sees how his father works from dawn to dusk and obviously wants to do better; he doesn't want to end up like him, and he hears his father telling him: "Put in the effort, study, I don't want to see you here like me, staying up late and getting up early, coming home all dirty and tired." On the other hand, a 'gabacho'[24] *son thinks: "It doesn't matter, there's my dad, he has all the benefits, I can adapt to any situation where he works." Therefore, his aspirations might be lower than those of someone, a*

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[24] "Gabacho" is a colloquial term used in some Latin American countries, particularly Mexico, to refer to individuals of European descent, especially Americans or English-speaking Europeans. In the context of this conversation, "gabacho" is being used to contrast Latin American or Hispanic youth with their white, American peers.

menos que una persona, que un alumno, un compañero, donde viene de abajo.	*student, [or] a peer who comes from the bottom.*

Parents, including Miguel Ángel, share that leveraging testimonios from Latinx peers is a compelling pedagogical approach to convey the lived experiences of Latinx (im)migrant families in the Solano Valley. They note that unlike their white peers, Latinx students cannot fall back on a safety net awarded by whiteness, thereby driving them to strive higher in their educational pursuits. They also acknowledge that the privileges associated with whiteness extend beyond school organizations, conferring inequitable resources, status, and power to whites over non-whites in other sectors. Consequently, they advocate for peer-led testimonios that underline the inextricable connection between racialized immigrant labor dynamics and the educational aspirations of youth. Through this approach, they argue, dual credit programs can be seen as a vehicle for Central youth to achieve their educational dreams.

School Leaders Respond to Parent Insights. The staff at Central School, though not directly responding to peer-led initiatives, recognized that having visible reminders about the realities of racialized immigrant labor translates into higher aspirations for postsecondary education among students. Paloma, the Migrant Staff Specialist, observed that seeing the sacrifices their communities make motivates youth to put in even more effort for their future success. She remarked, “Y sí, ven el sacrificio; van a tener que hacer más esfuerzos, más sacrificios para salir adelante" (“*And yes, they see the sacrifice; they will have to make more efforts, more sacrifices to get ahead.*”). Crystal further affirmed the challenges of systemic inequities and expressed solidarity in promoting a collective vision for Latinx students. She stated:

Yo también tengo high schoolers que van a la prepa, así de que son los mismos sueños y esperanzas que tengo para los niños de [Central], que es que ellos alcancen su potencial y empiecen a soñar algo que no han soñado, que descubran lo que quieren ser y que lo logre.	*I also have high schoolers who are attending prep[25] school, so my dreams and hopes for [Central] students are the same: that they reach their potential and start dreaming about things they haven't dreamt of before, that they discover what they want to be and achieve it.*

The reflections shared by Paloma and Crystal highlight the importance of recognizing and honoring the sacrifices made by (im)migrant communities. In this way, they are in agreement that maximizing dual credit and postsecondary education resources requires a community-oriented approach that weaves experiential and cultural knowledge.

Staff-Specific Professional Development

The relationship between several Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families and the staff at Central High School was strained by organizational practices and interpersonal dynamics. Despite this, parents voiced the value of continuing to nurture relationships that they and their children maintained with specific staff. To strengthen these connections, parents suggested offering targeted professional development to culturally and linguistically diverse staff members on dual credit programs, enabling them to share opportunities in culturally specific ways with students. Benito and Miguel Ángel communicated this recommendation as follows:

Benito: Es importante que [el personal] se capacite sobre los cuatro tipos de programas	***Benito****: It is important that [staff] receive training on the four types of dual credit*

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[25] "Prep," as used by Crystal in her original quote, is a casual reference to "preparatoria," the Spanish term for high school, typically comprising grades 10 through 12. This term should not be confused with Tech Prep, a specific type of dual credit program.

de doble crédito, asignando al menos tres o cuatro consejeros para que estén cien por ciento enfocados para dar información sobre estos programas a los niños.	*programs, assigning at least three or four counselors to be one-hundred percent focused on providing information about these programs to children.*
Miguel Ángel: Es aconsejable que la asesoría sea dirigida por un maestro que ya haya pasado por situaciones similares a las del estudiante o que sea de la misma cultura, para que la información sea más efectiva…tienes estas oportunidades de usar esta baraja de opciones; está en ti quedarte ahí como estás o salir adelante.” De esta manera, ¿A qué le tiras cuando sueñas, mexicano?[26] Como dice el refrán.	***Miguel Ángel:*** *It is advisable that the counseling be led by a teacher who has already gone through similar situations as the student or who is from the same culture, to make the information more effective…to say, "...you have these opportunities to use this deck of options; it's up to you to stay where you are or to move forward." In this way, what are you aiming for when you dream, Mexican? As the saying goes.*

Considering the constraints of limited district funding, parents proposed designating a small number of certified staff for intensive training on dual credit programs, thereby becoming specialized resources within the school. To deepen the impact, they suggested concentrating on staff who have lived experiences or cultural backgrounds in common with their students, as they can provide guidance that is both nuanced and relevant. This proposed strategy would allow the school to embody the feeling in the saying, "*¿A qué le tiras cuando sueñas, mexicano?*" thereby, cultivating stronger connections and understanding.

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[26] This saying highlights the importance of self-determination and resilience for Mexicans and Mexican Americans, who navigate a complex landscape of barriers due to racialization. It encourages individuals to consider their aspirations, not just in personal terms but also within the broader sociopolitical context that shapes possibilities and constraints. Furthermore, it serves as a reminder of the ability to dream and succeed despite historical and lived inequities, moving toward future possibilities.

School Leaders Respond to Parent Insights. School administrators revealed that despite Central staff participating in professional development programs, additional training was necessary because only half of the certified staff felt adequately prepared to advise students on dual credit opportunities. Inspired by the suggestion to focus on staff-specific professional development, Becker considered leveraging the reciprocal relationships that Migrant Staff Specialists had nurtured with Latinx (im)migrant families to offer culturally relevant guidance. He elaborated on a specific idea he found valuable:

> Yeah, one aspect I particularly appreciated was the idea of holding informational sessions but trying to get more involvement with staff like Miss [Lucía], Miss [Paloma], and Mr. [Roberto] to potentially lead these sessions for our Spanish-speaking students and parents, ensuring they receive more support in this area.

Becker's response to involve Migrant Staff specialists who already have established trust within the Latinx (im)migrant community demonstrates a promising step towards providing more culturally relevant and impactful guidance. However, the emphasis on "trying to get more involvement" suggests a possible lack of institutional support or recognition of the value these individuals bring to the table. It hints at the possibility that the contributions of Migrant Staff Specialists have been undervalued or overlooked in the past. Through open communication with parents, school leaders have come to recognize that staff members who share the community's histories, experiences, and cultural and linguistic practices are well-positioned to provide tailored support and information. They are especially positioned to offer culturally specific guidance on dual credit and postsecondary education, thereby better serving the needs of Latinx (im)migrant families.

Enhanced Communication: Spanish Translations and User-Friendly Resources

Parents expressed the need for enhanced Spanish-language resources to help them understand dual credit programs. They pointed out that although they received notifications about dual credit-related events such as Open Houses and informational sessions, these notices were not available in Spanish. Moreover, parents proposed that all information regarding dual credit should be recorded. This need became more apparent during the pandemic when many events shifted to online formats, and parents saw the benefits of recordings, which stopped once in-person learning resumed. Recording these events would have allowed families, including those with irregular farmworker schedules or those unable to attend in person, to access information at a later time. Magdalena explained:

> Yo quisiera que hubiera más juntas que fueran en español. A veces he recibido muchos mensajes, pero llegan en inglés y yo no puedo abrirlos, o sea, sí los puedo ver, pero no los entiendo. Eso es lo que quisiera, que los mensajes se envíen también en español o que, si hay juntas, se hagan en español para entender mejor. Y cuando haya talleres o juntas, si pudieran grabarse, sería ideal, así si uno no tiene tiempo para asistir debido al trabajo o a otras obligaciones, podría escucharlas después.

> *I would like there to be more meetings conducted in Spanish. Sometimes I receive many messages, but they are in English, and I can't open them. I mean, I can see them, but I don't understand them. That's what I would like, for the messages to be sent in Spanish too, or if there are meetings, that they be held in Spanish to better understand. And when there are workshops or meetings, if they could be recorded, that would be ideal, so if someone doesn't have time to attend due to work or other obligations, they could listen to them later.*

Considering that Spanish is the primary language for many families at Central High School, parents urged the school to prioritize linguistic diversity and inclusivity in their communication strategies. They also called for increased flexibility in distributing dual credit information by recording informational sessions and making them available online. Without such rudimentary access, parents implied that the school would continue sustaining racial and linguistic resource exclusion.

Parents also stressed the importance of providing clear and user-friendly information detailing college options—such as technical schools, two-year colleges, and four-year universities—along with associated costs and expectations. In this way, Central High School could demystify the postsecondary planning process. They also proposed a way for the school to organize and distribute this information as a readily accessible resource. Miguel Ángel relayed this suggestion:

No es encasillarnos, sino que se vaya la información… Yo lo veo como, imagínate, cuando te quieres ir de vacaciones y ves las opciones, los lugares y los hoteles te venden un paquete, un paquete vacacional. Entonces, en el paquete vacacional, vienen los hoteles, fotografías de los hoteles, los servicios que tiene, los días disponibles o todo lo que puedes hacer en un determinado día, un tiempo determinado según lo que necesites y vienen los costos de cuánto te sale con este	*It's not about pigeonholing us, but rather making the information available… I see it as, imagine, when you want to go on vacation and you see the options, the places, and the hotels sell you a package, a vacation package. So, in the vacation package, there are the hotels, photos of the hotels, the services they have, the available days, or everything you can do on a certain day, a certain amount of time depending on what you need, and there are the costs of how much it will cost you with*

paquete, cuánto te sale con otro. Entonces, a lo que voy es que yo lo comparo como el día de mañana, tener esa información para los papás donde diga: “Si me voy a esta universidad y estudió esta carrera, me va a salir en tanto en tanto tiempo. Si consigo esta beca, media, completa, o un cachito [de la matrícula será cubierta],” entonces para así ya va a ser un pastel completo tanto para el alumno como para sus papás.

this package, how much with another. So, what I'm getting at is that I compare it to having that information for the parents where it says: “If I go to this university and study this career, it will cost me so much in so much time. If I get this scholarship, half, complete, or a bit [of tuition will be covered],” so that way it will be a complete “cake” both for the student and for their parents.

Miguel Ángel and other parents proposed a strategic reframing of how educational information is presented to families, drawing an analogy to the consumer-friendly packaging of vacation packages. This suggestion implicitly criticizes the normative practices that often exclude Latinx (im)migrant families, such as navigating school websites and other communication channels which, even when translated, are cluttered with jargon and difficult to comprehend. They called for resources that are more accessible and straightforward, addressing the opaque and restrictive ways information is currently distributed within the school organization.

School Leaders Respond to Parent Insights. Central High School staff and leaders reported being aware of this district-wide issue involving disproportionate Spanish-language resources. Lucía reiterated a clear example of this problem during the school's Open House at the start of the academic year, noting the absence of Spanish translation for college preparatory programs. Additionally, Paloma disclosed that Central was awaiting approval for funding from the school district to secure Spanish-translated resources and materials. Despite these systemic challenges, Becker mentioned that the school leadership was taking proactive steps, such as "working on a manual for dual credit courses offered at [Central], available in both English and Spanish." This manual would provide students and their families with a comprehensive overview of the four types of dual credit available at the school.

Ultimately, Central's educational leaders and staff viewed Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families as valuable sources of knowledge from which to learn. They appreciated their insights on how school practices for distributing resources on dual credit and college preparation could be renegotiated with the experiential knowledge of families to create more equitable access. Becker encapsulated this sentiment by stating:

> I feel inspired that we can make real changes that will impact students in the years to come at [Central]. I want to thank all the parents for their recommendations. This is definitely going to open the eyes of our administration at [Central] and administrators throughout the district. What happened with this parent group will impact many more students throughout our entire [Solano] community, not just at [Central].

The recommendations from the parents were seen as significant catalysts for change, impacting not just Central High School but also resonating throughout the Solano community. This perspective acknowledges that individual educational experiences are intertwined with the overall well-being of the community, indicating that improving educational equity can yield benefits far beyond a single organization. In this way recognizing Mexican (im)migrant parents as agentic knowers and contributors to the educational discourse, rather than passive recipients of organizational decisions.

In summary, Latinx (im)migrant families responded to settled organizational practices and ideologies at Central High School by recommending a more equitable distribution of dual credit and college preparatory resources. Mexican (im)migrant parents proposed expansive strategies to disrupt white normativity by weaving cultural learning and experiential wisdom into the school's practices and norms. This section, moreover, highlighted that holding space for open communication between school leaders and parents could reframe leaders' views of families as agentic partners, ultimately working toward the de-racialization of school organizations.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter examined the landscape of racialized tracking at Central High School, highlighting how it restricted Latinx students' access to dual credit classes and opportunities. It illustrated that a similar racialized process was used to limit Latinx (im)migrant parents' access to resources, based on an involvement model that aligned with white normativity and perpetuated racial and linguistic ideologies. These organizational dynamics led parents to recommend culturally relevant strategies to engage with dual credit programs. Ultimately, this chapter brought to the forefront the subaltern wisdom, expertise, and strengths of Mexican (im)migrant communities, which have been undertheorized in the educational equity discourse, especially in dual credit changemaking.

Chapter 5

Leveraging Latinx (Im)migrant Experiential Knowledge to De-Racialize Dual Credit Access

This study was motivated by the need to explore how school organizational dynamics influence the distribution of dual credit resources and their implications for nondominant families (Taylor et al., 2022; Welton & Martinez, 2014). I sought to understand (a) how a high school as an organization perpetuated unequal access to dual credit resources, particularly for families diverging from white normativity; (b) how Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families perceived school practices and ideologies for accessing dual credit opportunities; and (c) how their experiences contributed to strategies for expanding dual credit access.

Understanding these organizational dynamics and familial expertise requires explicit attention to the power-laden contexts that families navigate. To that end, I used qualitative research methods grounded in Chicana feminist epistemology, along with theories of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) and LatCrit in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This approach allowed me to explore how racial and linguistic dynamics within a rural school's organizational structure influenced the distribution of dual credit resources and their implications for Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families. The study was guided by these research questions:

1. How does Central High School, as a racialized organization, disseminate or withhold dual credit resources from Latinx (im)migrant families?
    a. How do families experience and interpret organizational practices and ideologies that shape their access to dual credit resources?
2. What strategies do Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families propose to increase equity in access to dual credit opportunities?

This chapter synthesizes the key elements of the study and contextualizes the findings within the theoretical constructs introduced in Chapter 2. I first briefly review the study's purpose and design, acknowledging methodological limitations, and the study's theoretical framework. Following this, I discuss the significance of the findings through the lenses of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) and LatCrit in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) and in relation to existing empirical literature. Finally, I highlight the implications of the findings for dual credit and family engagement policy and practice, and conclude with suggestions for future research.

Research Motivation and Purpose

Over the last two decades, dual credit programs have emerged as viable pathways to postsecondary completion (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Garcia, Li, & Norris, 2020; Kolluri, 2018). Despite their potential, these programs remain untapped by high school students who have historically been marginalized within educational systems (Chatterji, Campbell, & Quirk, 2021). A contributing structural barrier is the hierarchized academic tracking undergirded by racial and linguistic ideologies that frame nondominant students as less capable than their white peers. These ideologies impact not only the students but also extend to their families, leading to unequal access to resources (Lareau, 2011; Lewis-McCoy, 2020; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Olivos, 2006; Tyson, 2011). Families that do not adhere to white norms for parental involvement are often excluded from accessing dual credit information for postsecondary preparation (Auerbach, 2012; Cooper, 2009; Kiyama & Harper, 2018). However, the existing literature has not sufficiently explored how nondominant families, such as Latinx (im)migrant families, experience and respond to these exclusionary organizational practices and ideologies surrounding dual credit opportunities.

To address the research gap, this study explored the normative practices and underlying racial ideologies within a rural school's organization that shape access to dual credit information for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker families. It also examined how families navigate school inequities and propose strategies to improve equity in accessing college preparatory courses and resources. The purpose was to understand how organizational dynamics restrict dual credit access and to explore how access could be expanded by leveraging the insights and knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Research Design and Limitations

I employed a qualitative research design grounded in Chicana feminist epistemology to examine how Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families experience and navigate racialized educational structures in accessing dual credit information and resources. A basic qualitative research design was most suitable for this study as it prioritizes the lived experiences and perspectives of families, allowing their interpretations to shape understandings of organizational inequities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Situated within a Chicana feminist epistemology, the research design identifies multiple sites of domination as generative *aperturas* for theoretical insights and reimagining new realities (Anzaldúa, 2000; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Through this epistemological stance, Mexican families offered strategies for de-racializing powered school organizations.

The research was conducted at Central High School, a rural school of 2,320 students serving grades 9 through 12. The school has a predominantly Latinx student body, making up 76.1% of the student population, with 25.7% identified as emergent bilinguals—learning English as an additional language. Additionally, the teaching staff is primarily white, making up 74.8% of educators. The selection of this site was based on four criteria: (a) geographic location; (b) demographic composition; (c) the availability of dual credit programs; and (d) historical data on dual credit access. Central is situated in Solano Valley, a region that has been an agricultural destination for migrant farmworkers since the Bracero Program in the mid-1940s. This historical and sociocultural context provided a critical backdrop for examining the nuanced, racialized, and language-based educational practices that (im)migrant parents and their children encounter within a rural school organization.

I used a homogeneous purposive sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) consisting of eight Latinx (im)migrant parents living in the Solano community. My selection criteria included:(a) parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled at Central High School; (b) participants who identify as Latinx immigrants; (c) participants who are currently employed as farmworkers or have a considerable history working in agricultural labor; (d) parents of students across different grade levels; and (e) participants with varied levels of experience with dual credit programs. Additionally, my sample included four staff members from Central High School, comprising one administrator and three personnel involved in family engagement.

Data were collected from November 2021 to March 2022 using multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding. These included individual and group pláticas, informal interviews, observations, and document analysis. Specifically, I conducted eight individual pláticas with parents, each lasting between 40 to 90 minutes, and eight group pláticas involving five parents, each lasting about an hour. Additionally, informal conversations were held with four school administrators and staff members. Observational data were collected during three staff meetings. I also reviewed digital documents pertinent to dual credit and postsecondary preparation available on the school's website. Supplemental data were drawn from a larger pilot study conducted in partnership with Pacific STEMworks and Central High School, which included course-taking and outcomes data, staff and student surveys, and student empathy interviews.

Data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection and involved a three-step process for making sense of the data and the building of theory: firstly, data reduction, where the data was organized and coded; secondly, data display, which entailed visualizing the data to aid interpretation; and thirdly, conclusion drawing and verification, which involved revisiting the data to cross-check emerging conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This analysis was facilitated using Dedoose, a software designed for qualitative data analysis that assists in managing data more efficiently. The dataset included transcripts, analytical memos, observational notes, and audio recordings. I employed a dialectical approach to coding, integrating both inductive and deductive methods to categorize and interpret the dataset systematically.

I implemented five key strategies to ensure trustworthiness and rigor in my research: triangulation, the constant comparative method, member checks, peer review, and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tierney & Clemens, 2011). I achieved triangulation by using varied data sources, such as pláticas and observations, and by incorporating perspectives from different participants, such as parents and administrators. The constant comparative method helped identify recurring patterns and notable outliers within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Member checks were conducted from a Chicana feminist perspective, ensuring participant involvement in the analysis process. Peer review involved seeking feedback from other researchers on my interpretations and writing. Finally, I applied thick description (Geertz, 1973) to enhance the transferability of the findings to other contexts.

Limitations

The first methodological limitation of this study concerns sampling of teachers. To gain insight into school practices, I primarily relied on the perspectives of non-teaching staff, potentially omitting insights from institutional stakeholders such as teachers who play a significant role in access to dual credit opportunities. Although I conducted informal conversations with the College and Career Specialist and the Multilingual Student Advocate and Migrant Specialists, formal interviews with both dual credit and non-dual credit teachers could have deepened the understanding of inequitable school practices.

Secondly, the study's temporal scope presents a limitation. The research was conducted from November to March, providing only a brief snapshot of the academic year. This limited timeframe may not fully encompass the entire season during which dual credit information is disseminated, missing key moments and variations in how this information is shared throughout the school year. Ideally, extending the data collection across various academic periods would provide a more comprehensive understanding. However, this period was chosen because it coincided with the winter off-season in agricultural labor when Mexican (im)migrant parents were more readily available to participate.

Thirdly, my data collection was impacted and limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, I started collecting data through in-person pláticas with parents and informal conversations with staff. However, by December, I had to shift to online data collection methods as the county where Central High School is located became one of the hardest-hit areas by COVID-19 in Washington State, including new variants of the virus. My observations at the school were confined to occasions when I could join staff meetings via a provided Zoom link. This shift also introduced challenges in conducting pláticas with Mexican (im)migrant families, some of whom did not have internet access or were unfamiliar with digital platforms. To address these issues, I conducted some individual pláticas over the phone and, in other instances, guided parents through the process of using Zoom.

Review of Theories: Racialized Organizations and LatCrit Framework

I applied a multidisciplinary framework incorporating the Theory of Racialized Organizations (Ray, 2019) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) to analyze how practices and ideologies at a rural high school exclude nondominant families from accessing dual credit resources. The Theory of Racialized Organizations provides a meso-level perspective to identify exclusionary practices at Central High School, while LatCrit theory elucidates intersecting inequities related to race, language, immigration status, and labor. Additionally, LatCrit offers a lens for anchoring the experiential truths of subaltern communities. Together, these theories create a multiscale framework, *una teoría de cambio in racialized educational organizations*, that examines organizational inequities and centers familial expertise as a starting point for constructing alternative possibilities.

The theory of racialized organizations offered a lens for analyzing the structures, practices, and outcomes of school organizations, which, though often presumed to be neutral or engaged in “color evasion”, are deeply racialized. This framework focuses on the meso-level, as depicted in Table 4, bridging macro-level institutional constructs with micro-level individual interactions, and illustrating how organizations shape racial dynamics. The framework is structured around four key tenets: (1) racialized organizations shape agency; (2) they legitimize the unequal distribution of resources; (3) they treat whiteness as a credential; and (4) they involve racialized decoupling. My analysis primarily centered on how Central High School, a racialized organization, legitimizes the unequal distribution of resources and shapes agency, as these aspects were most evident in the data.

Table 4

Levels of Analysis, Ray (2019)

Level of Analysis	Typical Analytic Frames	Representative Features	Conflict Over
Institutional (Macro)	The racial state Institutionalized racism	State racial categorization Racialized laws (explicit or implicit) Expropriation	Group membership State resources National inclusion
Organizational (Meso)	Individual workplaces Schools Churches	Wage differentials Racialized tracking Racial segregation	Jobs, equal pay Equitable education Enforcement of anti-discrimination law
Individual Level (Micro)	Prejudice Racial attitudes Implicit bias	Stereotypes In-group favoritism	Interactions Exclusion Unequal treatment

Building on a theory of racialized organizations, LatCrit in education allowed me to analyze how Central High School reproduces racialized policies, norms, practices, and scripts for engagement that intersect with other dimensions of subjugation such as language, labor, and immigration status to compound and multiply inequities. This theoretical approach is grounded in five core principles: (1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality; (2) challenging dominant ideologies; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) valuing experiential knowledge; and (5) interdisciplinary perspectives. My analysis concentrated on the impact of the school's white normative engagement practices on the experiences of Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families and the importance of prioritizing experiential familial knowledge in developing alternative practices. These two principles were most prominent in the data.

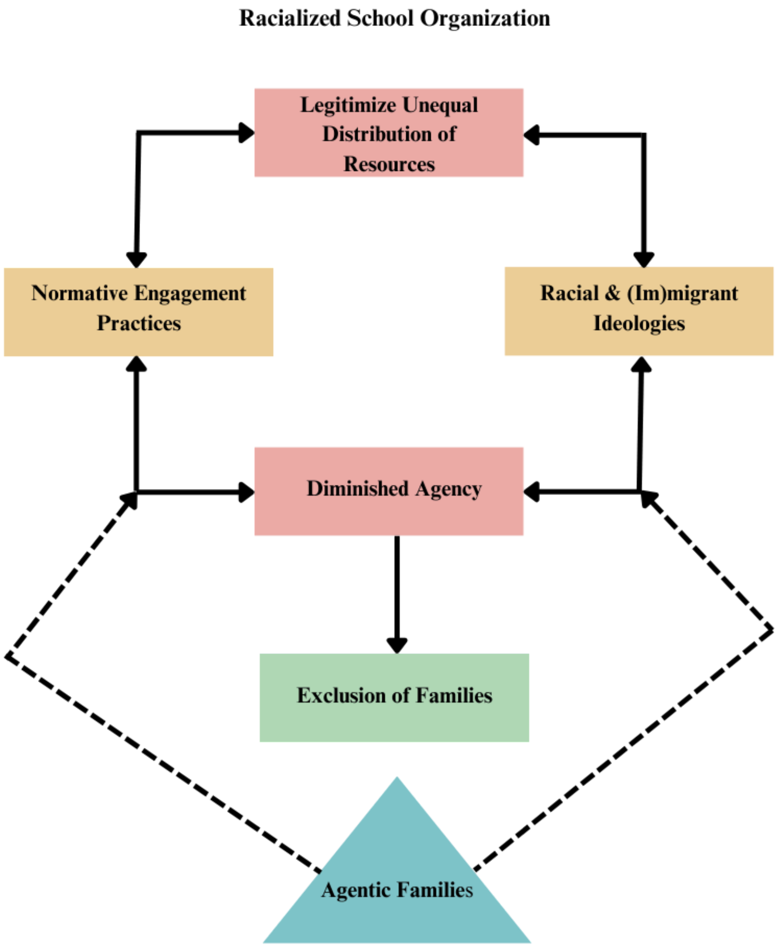
Tejiendo una Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations

My conceptual framework wove these two critical theories to explore how racialized structures and practices at Central High School affect access to dual credit knowledge (see

Figure 15). The school's engagement practices and racial ideologies led to the unequal distribution of dual credit resources among Mexican (im)migrant parents and their youth. This inequity diminished the ability of parents and students to make informed decisions about college preparation. Yet, amidst these power dynamics, Mexican families drew on their experiential wisdom, resilience, and community ties to challenge and reshape these restrictive norms. Thus, my framework—*una teoría de cambio in racialized educational organizations*—examines these school disparities and prioritizes familial expertise as a foundation for developing more expansive practices toward equitable access to dual credit resources.

Figure 15

Teoría de Cambio in Racialized Educational Organizations


Racialized School Organization
Legitimize Unequal Distribution of Resources
Normative Engagement Practices
Racial & (Im)migrant Ideologies
Diminished Agency
Exclusion of Families
Agentic Families

Findings: Theoretical and Empirical Significance

The previous chapter presented data showing that Central High School's organizational dynamics led to unequal access to dual credit resources for Latinx (im)migrant families and their youth. However, it also demonstrated that despite these inequities, Latinx (im)migrant families used their collective experiential wisdom to develop recommendations for improved access. In this section, I synthesize the data into three key findings that address the research questions, and then analyze their theoretical and empirical significance. The key findings are:

1. Central High School creates unequal access to dual credit information for Latinx (im)migrant parents through two organizational routines: normative engagement practices and racial ideologies.
    a. Latinx (im)migrant parents experience marginalization and exclusion driven by these racialized practices and ideologies.
2. Latinx (im)migrant parents offer strategies to reshape and renegotiate school practices for equitable access to dual credit programs by leveraging their experiential and cultural knowledge.

In what follows, I elaborate on each finding, summarizing the data from Chapter 4, and connecting to the theoretical frameworks introduced in Chapter 2. I also discuss the empirical significance of this study, focusing on the experiences of Latinx (im)migrant families, an area that has received limited attention in existing dual credit research (Taylor et al., 2022).

Finding 1: Central High School creates unequal access to dual credit information for Latinx (im)migrant parents through two organizational routines: normative engagement practices and racial ideologies.

Central High School disseminated and withheld access to dual credit resources from Latinx (im)migrant families through exclusionary practices and logics. By legitimizing specific forms of parental involvement, the school influenced the distribution of dual credit resources based on racialized assumptions. Such taken-for-granted practices also shaped the latitude of agency parents exercise regarding their youth's college preparation.

Racialized Organizations

Schools are often perceived as race-neutral terrains; however, they are encoded with constructed notions of race that influence their operations (Ray, 2019; Stewart, García, & Petersen, 2021). This influence is evident in how racial hierarchies intertwine with the rules and practices of educational organizations, impacting both the allocation of material resources and social interactions. The findings from this study illustrate that Central High School, as a racialized organization, regulated its norms and behaviors through specific engagement practices for distributing dual credit opportunities. These practices not only legitimized the unequal distribution of resources but also shaped agency according to existing racial hierarchies.

Legitimization of Unequal Distribution of Resources. Parent involvement in accessing college preparatory resources at Central High School was marked by a litany of behaviors and activities, such as attendance at open houses, using formal communication channels like ParentSquare and the school website, and knowing what questions to ask to access information. The school expected Latinx (im)migrant parents and their children to follow these engagement practices that provided a blueprint for actions within the educational organization. While seemingly innocuous and perceived as race-neutral, these practices were predicated on white, middle-class norms that limited access to resources if parents departed from such engagement.

Consequently, the school legitimized *how* information was obtained and *who* had access to dual credit resources through normative involvement practices.

Sustained by Central High School personnel, these school-based activities for parents legitimized an unequal distribution of dual credit resources. For example, staff expected parents to access dual credit information through ParentSquare, the school's primary communication tool adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite parents' attempts to engage by using other existing communication resources, such as Central's and the school district's Facebook pages, they learned from Migrant Staff Specialists that comprehensive information was not shared on those platforms. The school's reliance on ParentSquare was based on the belief that centralizing communication would be more equitable. However, it overlooked the diverse communication landscapes that Mexican (im)migrant families used, thus limiting their access to DC resources.

Diminished Agency. Beyond legitimizing a prescribed model of parent involvement, these normative practices also diminished the agency of Latinx (im)migrant parents to make informed decisions about dual credit opportunities and broader postsecondary and career pathways. The school's College and Career Specialist highlighted that educators historically had lower academic expectations for Latinx students. He explained that these biases, prevalent among long-standing, predominantly white staff members, led to the systematic tracking of Latinx students into lower-level courses, even within dual credit programs. These racialized ideologies impacted not just Latinx students but also their families, affecting their engagement and the support they received from the school.

Latinx (im)migrant families discovered that adherence to Central's expected norms of engagement did not yield the same support or recognition as it did for dominant families.

Instead, their efforts were met with disparagement from school staff, leading to feelings of demoralization. For instance, Ximena, a parent from Central High School, recounted her diligent involvement in her son's education, from attending meetings to monitoring his scholarship applications. Despite her active participation, she was rebuffed by a counselor who told her that her presence was unnecessary and that her son should be independent. This interaction left her feeling alienated and diminished her agency to continue advocating for her child's college preparation. Ximena's experience underscores the racialized expectations within the school that devalued the engagement of Latinx immigrant parents, even when they followed normative behaviors.

Additionally, well-intentioned school policies further diminished the agency of parents to make informed decisions about their children's college preparation. When parents sought information about scholarships, school staff suggested waiting until the student was in a higher grade, under the assumption that such information was irrelevant for younger students. This policy of delaying access to postsecondary education information reflected a logistical approach where college and financial planning are typically targeted at students nearing graduation, who presumably have a clearer sense of their academic interests, career goals, and preferred colleges. However, this practice failed to acknowledge that nondominant, first-generation parents and their children benefit from earlier support in the process. By postponing this guidance, Central High School inadvertently diminished Latinx (im)migrant families' decision-making agency and readiness for the future.

Finding 1a: Latinx (im)migrant parents experience marginalization and exclusion driven by racialized practices and ideologies.

This subsection examines how Latinx (im)migrant families experienced Central High School's organizational practices and ideologies that shaped their access to dual credit resources. The primary finding indicates that Central legitimized the unequal distribution of dual credit opportunities through normative practices and ideologies, diminishing the agency of parents. This sub-finding, additionally, reveals how the school's racialized routines intersected with other forms of oppression to exacerbate exclusion. Specifically, the school's routines: (a) privileged non-immigrant, middle-class families through their organizational script of "asking"; (b) disregarded the linguistic needs of non-English speaking families; and (c) disseminated dual credit information at times that excluded migrant families who enrolled later in the academic year.

LatCrit in Education

The racial dynamics unfolding at Central High School were neither monolithic nor linear; rather, they intersected with other factors, including immigration status, language, class, and migrant labor. These intersections exacerbated disparities in accessing dual credit programs and postsecondary preparation. Central's norms and routines contributed to the marginalization and exclusion of Latinx (im)migrant families, highlighting how multiple axes of subjugation compounded access to resources.

The Centrality of Race and Racism and their Intersectionality. Latinx (im)migrant parents were aware of the racialized practices and immigrant-specific ideologies their children's school used to distribute dual credit opportunities. They observed that the school's expectation for parents to actively seek support — a practice known as the "asking" script — reified normative assumptions about engagement. This approach privileged parents with dominant social and cultural capital, who could navigate the educational system with more confidence and advocate formally for their children's postsecondary preparation needs. For instance, recall Ana Xochi, who highlighted the disparity between these experienced families and Mexican immigrant families, new to the U.S. education system, without the same institutional knowledge that white, non-immigrant, English-speaking families take for granted—an advantage implicitly supported by school practices. This model of participation disregarded dynamics such as immigration status and class, perpetuating a cycle of inequitable access and exclusion by maintaining the same expectations without considering the broader systemic forces Mexican (im)migrant parents experience.

However, even as they attempted to participate in ways expected by the school system, Mexican (im)migrant parents were effectively excluded due to the school's inadequate attention to their linguistic needs. The Migrant Staff Specialists notified parents that information about dual credit opportunities is offered early in the school year at an Open House event, where they are invited to learn about various academic, extracurricular, and athletic programs available to students. The specialists also admitted that the school had consistently struggled to provide Spanish translation services at these events. They revealed that the school is awaiting district approval to fund resources and materials translated into Spanish.

The school's issues with linguistic accessibility were not limited to in-person events but also affected its digital communications. Parents reported that while exploring the school website for information on dual credit resources, they could not find any content available in Spanish. In contrast, disciplinary notifications, such as student absences, were routinely provided in Spanish. This selective use of bilingual resources demonstrates that while Central High School could offer comprehensive bilingual communication, it chose to do so in a limited way that systematically excluded Mexican (im)migrant families from fully accessing dual credit resources.

In other instances, Mexican parents noticed that their status as (im)migrant farmworkers may have led educators to withhold information about dual credit programs. They speculated that their mid-year enrollment, due to seasonal migration for agricultural work, and their immigration status were factors in not receiving this information. For example, Mireya, a parent of a junior at the school, expressed concerns that their recent enrollment and her daughter's non-citizen status might be reasons for the lack of information provided. These parents perceived a connection between their marginalized identities and the limited communication and resources offered by the school regarding dual credit programs.

Central's practices for distributing information on dual credit opportunities compounded inequities based on these intersecting identities. Typically, the school shared information about college preparatory courses during an open house at the beginning of the year, excluding migrant farmworker parents who had a late entry into the school system. Although this timing for disseminating information may appear logical for strategic planning and support, it excluded families that do not start the school year at the traditional time. Early distribution of dual credit options helped families understand the implications of these courses on workload, prerequisites, and enrollment deadlines, but it also left out migrant families who needed this information year-round.

Furthermore, as Mireya and other parents pointed out, staff might also withhold information about dual enrollment due to their immigration status. Although not overtly acknowledged by school staff, the school's history of deficit racial ideologies may have underlied these practices. Central High School indicated a low priority in providing comprehensive information to undocumented families, as shown by the absence of data on postsecondary outcomes for DACA and undocumented students enrolled in dual credit programs.

Whether intentional or not, such policies and behaviors reinforced racialized exclusion, impacting the access and participation of Mexican (im)migrant families in the school organization.

Conclusion. Findings 1 and 1a reveal a complex interplay of racialized practices, ideologies, and intersecting oppressions that shape the access and experiences of Latinx (im)migrant families within Central High School's dual credit opportunities. From a Racialized Organizations (Ray, 2019) lens, Central actively engaged in racialization by constructing, negotiating, and perpetuating racial hierarchies. This theory illustrates how racialization manifested within the school through both overt and subtle practices.

The school's routines and expectations for parental involvement, while seemingly neutral and equitable on the surface, were encoded in white normativity. Overtly racist practices, such as the failure to provide accessible language materials in Spanish for Latinx (im)migrant families, explicitly marginalized and excluded them. More subtly, the school's routine practices, such as delaying the dissemination of information about postsecondary requirements and resources until the upper grades, disadvantaged Latinx (im)migrant families who would have benefited from earlier support in the process, as they were navigating the U.S. educational system for the first time and supporting first-generation college-goers. These deeply ingrained routines, often perceived as “business as usual,” masked their racial underpinnings and perpetuated a system that upholds whiteness.

LatCrit Theory expands the understanding of racial dynamics within organizations by highlighting how institutions like Central High School operate on racial logics that intersect with other axes of identity and social stratification. This intersectional lens shows how racial dynamics intertwine with factors like immigration status, language, class, and migrant labor, creating a complex web of exclusion for Latinx (im)migrant farmworker parents. Even when parents attempted to engage in normative practices, their participation is often delegitimized, devalued, or viewed as an intrusion due to these intersecting factors. Thus, the synergy between the Theory of Racialized Organizations and LatCrit Theory provided a more nuanced and comprehensive lens for analyzing how Central High School's practices not only perpetuated racial inequalities but also exacerbated them through additional layers of marginalization.

Empirical Significance

My research makes an important contribution to the field by focusing on the perspectives of nondominant families in accessing dual credit resources, an area that is under-explored in dual credit literature (Taylor et al., 2022). Previous studies have primarily examined dual credit access through the lens of racialized academic tracking and its impact on students, particularly Latinx and Black youth (Cantu, 2019; Kolluri, 2018; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Oakes, 2005; Ochoa, 2013; Schneider, 2009; Welton & Martinez, 2014). However, there has been little to no exploration of how these racialized organizational processes affect nondominant families' access to dual credit program information.

Additionally, the literature has investigated the role of white parents in exerting agency over their children's placement into dual credit and honors courses, demonstrating the considerable social and cultural power these parents wield in schools (Diamond & Lewis, 2022; Lewis-McCoy, 2020; Lyken-Segosebe & Hinz, 2015). Yet there remains an absence of research that addresses how Families of Color navigate the same information landscape or how they understand its implications. My research fills this gap by revealing how Latinx (im)migrant families perceive and are influenced by the school processes that distribute dual credit access, adding a critical dimension to the understanding of dual credit dynamics across ethnic, immigration, language, labor, and other intersectional factors.

My study showed how organizational practices within a rural high school diminished the capacity of Latinx (im)migrant families to access advanced college preparatory resources. Traditional models of parent involvement, which legitimize active participation in school activities, often imply that families who do not conform to these norms are disinterested in their children's college readiness and higher education transition. Activities such as attending open house events, using formal communication platforms like ParentSquare and the school website, and knowing the right questions to ask for higher education information are typically structured around white cultural norms. This is reflected in the types of resources provided, the information shared, and the methods of communication (Cooper et al., 2010; Kiyama & Harper, 2018; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). As a result, these practices sustain racialized academic hierarchies by creating unequal access to college preparatory programs.

My research further illustrated the operational ideologies within school organizations that shape expectations and interactions with Latinx (im)migrant parents. When parents tried to meet normative involvement expectations, they experienced differential treatment and access, encountering condescension from staff or being perceived as disinterested, despite their actions demonstrating their love and commitment to their children's education. From the perspective of families, the cumulative effect of these organizational dynamics—both practices and ideologies—creates an inaccessible system. My work shows that these barriers are woven into the daily operations of schools and the routine practices of staff, representing what is perceived as the normal functioning of educational institutions, rather than exceptions to the rule.

Finding 2: Latinx (im)migrant parents offer strategies to reshape and renegotiate school practices for equitable access to dual credit programs by leveraging their experiential and cultural knowledge.

This section delves into the strategies proposed by Latinx (im)migrant parents to improve equity in accessing dual credit resources. Drawing on their experiential knowledge, they recommended four key recommendations: (1) grade-level advisory for early exposure; (2) peer-led initiatives; (3) staff-specific professional development; and (4) enhanced communication. These recommendations were grounded in relational strategies that challenge the prevailing deficit ideologies held about Latinx (im)migrant families and their children.

LatCrit in Education

The organizational dynamics at Central High School often delegitimized and diminished the experiential knowledge, cultural and linguistic resources, and repertoires of Latinx (im)migrant parents navigating dual credit processes. However, parents resisted this marginalization by proposing inclusive strategies for themselves and their youth to engage with these programs and college preparatory resources. They presented expansive ways to disrupt white normativity by weaving cultural learning and lived experiences into the school's organizational practices and norms.

Valuing experiential knowledge. Latinx immigrant parents, having experienced the marginalizing effects of being expected to navigate complex school systems without adequate support, proposed a solution. They advocated for a grade-level advisory program focused on early exposure to dual credit and post-secondary requirements. This advisory model would not only provide students with information and resources but also involve parents in the process, challenging the “organizational script of asking” that disproportionately disadvantages nondominant families. Furthermore, this approach would address the current practice of delaying college preparatory resources, such as scholarship information, until students reach at least the 11th grade. By providing this information earlier, the advisory program would renegotiate the traditional timeline for distributing resources, and offer better support to Latinx (im)migrant parents guiding first-generation college-bound students.

Recognizing the need to shift power dynamics within Central High School, parents proposed moving away from deficit-oriented approaches towards recognizing the strengths and cultural knowledge of minoritized youth. They highlighted the high aspirations of Latinx (im)migrant youth for postsecondary education, often shaped by their lived experiences with the racialized farmworker labor system in the Solano Valley. Parents acknowledged that these students are keenly aware of how whiteness confers unequal access to resources, status, and power, extending beyond school organizations into sectors like the agricultural labor system. To leverage these powerful lived experiences, parents proposed a peer-led initiative where former Latinx (im)migrant students who successfully navigated dual credit programs at Central would return to share their testimonios. By sharing their experiences and aspirations, these alumni could offer a powerful cultural motivation known as “ánimo” to current students. This proposal expands conventional academic support by recognizing the value of peer mentorship and the power of sociocultural wisdom.

Parents suggested targeted professional development for specific staff members, such as Migrant Staff Specialists, who have cultivated two-way relationships with Latinx (im)migrant families. This training would focus on enhancing these staff members’ ability to provide culturally and linguistically relevant guidance on dual credit programs. Despite experiencing dismissive interactions with other staff, parents saw an opportunity to build upon these positive relationships to repair trust, bridging the gap between parents and the school organization. By investing in the professional development of these trusted staff members, the school could transform them into specialized resources for dual credit information and support. This approach would not only bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps that hinder effective communication but also foster meaningful, caring relationships between the school and (im)migrant families.

In their final recommendation, parents emphasized the need to prioritize Spanish translations for all dual credit and postsecondary preparatory materials and to present them in a user-friendly format. This change would address the systemic exclusion faced by parents unable to access school resources due to language barriers. Currently, resources like Open House events and school website information, though technically available, are not accessible to parents who do not speak English. Parents also proposed a shift in how information is presented, urging the school to adopt an approach similar to the consumer-friendly packaging of vacation packages. This contrasts with the school's current practice of using jargon-heavy materials that remain complex and inaccessible, even when translated. Implementing this strategy would counter the opaque and restrictive distribution of information at Central, aiming to make educational resources more equitable and accessible.

Conclusion. Finding 2 illustrates the importance of centering the priorities and experiences of Latinx (im)migrant parents as starting points to construct alternative possibilities. Their collective knowledge and insights offer generative *aperturas*, or pathways, for challenging the exclusionary and racialized practices entrenched in dual credit programs. These strategies include creating inclusive advisory programs, leveraging peer support through testimonios and ánimo, enhancing staff training on cultural and linguistic inclusivity, and improving the clarity and accessibility of communication about dual credit opportunities. Each strategy was designed to break down organizational barriers that traditionally preclude equitable access to educational resources, particularly for immigrant communities. By developing these expansive strategies for reshaping and renegotiating existing practices, parents contributed to the de-centering and de-racialization of normative routines at Central High School.

Incorporating LatCrit Theory's focus on valuing experiential knowledge reframes nondominant families not as passive recipients of operational dynamics but as agentic knowers and critical contributors to educational change. This perspective challenges the traditional, hierarchical view of schools as the sole authority in decision-making processes. Instead, it positions families' cultural and linguistic repertoires as primary sources of wisdom and change-making in the process of educational reform and equity.

Empirical Significance

This research advances the literature on family engagement and leadership by highlighting the agency of Latinx (im)migrant families to shape school practices related to dual credit opportunities. Previous studies have explored how Latinx families interact within urban elementary school contexts and transform their interactions, roles, and actions, (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; Durán, Carruba-Rogel, & Solis, 2020; Fernández & Paredes Scribner, 2020; Kuttner et al., 2022; Oliva & Alemán, 2019; Rodela, 2016; Vélez, 2016). This work shows how Latinx (im)migrant parents, especially mothers, reshape curriculum, policies, and programs to reflect their communities' priorities and interests. Yet, little is known about the capacity of Latinx families to shape educational opportunities toward *postsecondary education* (Kiyama et al., 2015). My study reveals how parents navigate and engage in rural, racialized school organizations as their children prepare to transition to postsecondary education.

My research indicates that the challenges faced by Latinx (im)migrant farmworker parents, such as organizational barriers highlighted in their proposed solutions, are fundamentally linked to issues of power, culture, and racialized assumptions. Removing barriers like language inaccessibility and scheduling conflicts reveals a deeper desire among parents: to feel included, to nurture reciprocal relationships with staff, to be recognized for their brilliance and expertise, and to have agency over decisions concerning their children's futures. These findings suggest that the problems extend beyond simple issues like the lack of translated materials or knowledge of educational procedures; rather, they involve a lack of authentic opportunities for participation and decision-making influence. By centering the voices and experiences of Latinx (im)migrant parents, my research shifts the narrative from passive to active participation, challenging the dominant white, assimilative paradigms of school engagement.

Additionally, my study adds to the growing recognition of the transformative role that families and their experiential knowledge play as catalysts for educational change (Cooper et al., 2010; Gil & Johnson, 2024; Ishimaru et al., 2019; Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011). Traditionally, power structures in schools place administrators and educators at the top of the decision-making hierarchy, relegating families, particularly those from nondominant cultures, to a lesser role (Cooper et al. 2010). This hierarchical model of school-family relations reifies the invisible assumption that parents are not part of the solution to educational inequities. However, as my findings revealed, Latinx (im)migrant parents are not only aware of school challenges but are active in crafting solutions to the organizational barriers that limit their access to dual credit programs. Their strategies, rooted in collective experiential knowledge, counter deficit-based ideologies and offer valuable lessons for creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Implications for Policy and Practice

I identify four implications for policy and practice based on the findings of this study. The first implication for educational policy is regarding how dual credit data is utilized and shared. Families are largely disconnected from the day-to-day data practices in schools and districts (Khalifa et al., 2015). This was apparent in my study when Central High School collected data on student outcomes and inequities within dual credit programs, but this was not shared with parents. One area for improvement is increasing transparency by sharing all relevant dual credit data with families, especially those marginalized within the school organization. This data should include enrollment and completion rates, disaggregated by student demographics, such as migrant and undocumented status, to the extent possible. Involving parents in the interpretation and application of this data is also critical. Families must transition from being passive recipients of information to active participants in the decision-making processes that directly impact their children's education. Engaging families in this way challenges the traditional power dynamics within schools, shifting from a top-down dissemination of information to a collaborative, inclusive model.

Another implication involves ensuring more equitable access to dual credit resources. Latinx (im)migrant parents noted the absence of adequate Spanish language supports to learn about the suite of dual credit resources available. A practical response would be for school districts to implement policies that require school materials, communications, and parent meetings to be available in multiple languages, particularly those prevalent among the student body. This goes beyond basic translation services to include bilingual staff and culturally competent interactions. Such measures are critical for fostering meaningful engagement with diverse families, especially in schools with a predominantly white staff and a student body composed mainly of Students and Families of Color.

Parents in my study also criticized two organizational practices related to the timing of resource distribution. Firstly, information about dual credit programs is typically provided at the start of the school year. While this timing aligns with strategic planning needs, it excludes migrant families whose children may not begin the school year at the conventional time. Secondly, there is a common practice of delaying the provision of college preparatory resources, like scholarship information, until students reach their junior year. This delay can hinder nondominant families who would benefit from beginning their planning and preparation earlier. To mitigate these issues, schools could adopt a more flexible approach to information dissemination. This involves distributing detailed information about dual credit programs, including available financial support options such as fee waivers, on a quarterly or trimester basis. This would ensure that all families receive timely and comprehensive information regardless of their entry point into the school system or their child's current grade. By leveraging various communication methods to disseminate this information, including phone calls, Skyward, social media channels, and printed brochures, schools could expand their outreach to families. Ultimately, enhancing parents' agency to make informed decisions about their children's academic futures.

The last implication my study offers is the need to reframe the role of families within school organizations, positioning them as agentic knowers and active contributors to discussions about dual credit equity. The relationships between nondominant parents and school staff are shaped by racial assumptions and ideologies concerning their commitment to and involvement in their children's education (Baquedano-Lopez et. al, 2013; Cooper, 2010; Olivos, 2006; Pérez

Carreon et al., 2005; Valdès, 1996). Parents in my study expressed feelings of marginalization and dismissal by school organizations due to their social status. One consideration is holding space within the school organization for parents to collectively reflect on their experiences regarding access to dual credit opportunities. In this study, when parents engaged in group pláticas, they developed several generative strategies to improve access to college preparatory programs. This demonstrates the untapped potential that lies within communities to contribute meaningfully to educational reforms when they are acknowledged as key partners and given a platform to share their expertise and wisdom.

Directions for Future Research

I identify four avenues for future inquiry. First, future research is needed that focuses on dual credit access from the perspective of families, especially anchored in the experiential truths of subaltern communities. This research could explore how intersecting identities, such as gender, race, and immigration status, impact access to and benefits from dual credit programs. Such studies could provide insights into the complex organizational barriers and broader sociopolitical dynamics that constrain equitable access to dual credit programs for students within the Latinx community and other minoritized groups. Additionally, there is a need to expand research beyond institutional factors and investigate the role of cultural capital and social networks in facilitating dual credit access. While this study focused on interactions with school staff and resources, some parents indicated that extended family members provided information and support related to dual credit. This body of work can provide insight into how cultural knowledge, social connections, and community resources influence families' awareness and understanding of dual credit opportunities, as well as their ability to navigate the enrollment process and support their children's success.

Further research is needed within family engagement and leadership studies to explore how Latinx (im)migrant families shape school agendas *towards* improving access to postsecondary resources and opportunities. This study provided a collective space for parents to make sense of dual credit inequities and formulate strategies; however, this can be expanded upon using participatory design research methods (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). By employing a co-design process that recognizes Latinx (im)migrant families as experts *alongside* educators, future studies could investigate how weaving cultural and institutional knowledge can foster the development of new practices for equitable dual credit access. Relatedly, more studies are needed that examine authentic collaborations between Latinx immigrant parents and school administration that disrupt traditional, hierarchical models of school-family relations. By examining how power dynamics can be shifted towards shared decision-making and co-creation, researchers can identify strategies for reciprocal partnerships that empower families to contribute to the design and implementation of equitable dual credit processes.

Additional research on rural school organizations is important for understanding how region-specific contexts and geographic spatiality affect access to dual credit resources and opportunities. Future research could delve deeper into how funding disparities, limited course offerings, teacher shortages, and transportation barriers create a unique set of inequities for rural students seeking dual credit opportunities. Correspondingly, research could explore innovative solutions that leverage technology and community partnerships to expand access to dual credit in rural areas. This could include online course offerings, virtual mentoring programs, and collaborations with local colleges and universities to provide transportation and other support services. Furthermore, there is a need in the field to understand how rural racialized regions impact the objectives of dual credit education and the populations it serves. This study briefly touched upon the perspectives of parents who view dual credit as a pathway to liberation from exploitative agricultural labor. However, further exploration is needed to examine the motivations and goals of rural school organizations that are often politically and economically influenced by agribusiness. This nuanced understanding can shed light on dual credit goals in rural settings and the predominant types of dual credit courses available, such as CTE agriculture science, and whether they genuinely serve the needs and aspirations of rural students and their families.

Finally, there is a need for a more inclusive approach in studies that explore the intersection of dual credit and Advanced Placement programs. Many existing studies tend to examine dual credit and AP programs separately, missing the opportunity to understand how these programs interact and complement each other within the same school context. Examining both exam-based and course-completion college preparatory programs can reveal patterns of tracking within these systems. This study found an overrepresentation of Latinx male students channeled into lower-level CTE courses, suggesting that tracking and hierarchical structures may persist even *within* dual credit offerings. Additionally, researching the intersection of these programs can provide insights into the varying levels of support that families receive from different types of college preparatory programs, whether they are based in high schools or on college campuses.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complexities and challenges of dual credit access for Latinx (im)migrant families within the organizational dynamics of a rural high school. Drawing on qualitative methods and theories of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) and LatCrit in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001), this research examined how normative engagement practices and racial biases create unequal access to dual credit resources. Despite these organizational barriers, this research also illuminates the resilience and agency of Latinx (im)migrant families, who leverage their experiential and cultural knowledge to propose strategies for improving equity in dual credit access. Ultimately, the study speaks to the reshaping and renegotiating of organizational dynamics toward an educational ecosystem that de-centers whiteness in engagement and access to dual credit opportunities.

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Appendix A

Parent Interview Guide

Family Aspirations

1. Can you tell me about your hopes and dreams for your children's future after they graduate high school?
    a. How are you supporting your children in achieving these dreams?
    b. How is the school helping you or not helping you achieve these dreams?
2. Can you tell me what your child aspires to do after graduating high school?
    a. How do your child's aspirations align or differ from your own dreams for them?
    b. To what extent do your children's plans involve pursuing higher education or additional training after high school?
3. How would you like [Central] High School to support you in helping your child achieve their postsecondary education plans and dreams?

Knowledge about the College-Going Process

4. What do you understand are the steps your child needs to take to pursue their post-high school goals?
    a. What are the specific course requirements they must meet?
    b. What other actions might be helpful in reaching those goals?
5. How accessible are college-related opportunities for your child at [Central] High School?
    a. To what extent has the school communicated with you about them?
6. To what extent has your child's school or teachers provided you with information about the college application process, such as college entrance exams (SAT/ACT) and financial aid applications?

Dual Credit Knowledge (College Prep Coursework)

7. What have you heard about dual credit courses at [Central] High School?
    a. What kinds of dual credit courses are offered?
    b. What do you understand to be the difference between the various types?
8. What is your understanding of the purpose of dual credit courses in relation to what a student plans to do after high school?
9. How much information have you received from [Central] High School staff and teachers about the different dual credit programs available (e.g., Running Start, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, College in the High School (CHS) courses,Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses)?
10. What do you think [Central] High School should be doing to support your child and other students in enrolling in dual credit courses?

Additional Comments

11. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences, thoughts, or concerns related to your child's education or their preparation for life after high school?

Appendix B

Table 5: Overview of Plática Sessions

Plática Topic and Guiding Questions	Purpose
1. *Family Dreams: Our Children's Futures* ● What are your hopes and dreams for your children's future? ● What do you know about dual credit programs, and how do they fit into your vision for your child's education?	To share and connect over the dreams families hold for their children's futures while building a common understanding of dual credit opportunities and their importance.
2. *Inequitable DC Enrollment* ● How do you feel about the disparities in dual credit enrollment data presented? ● What similarities or differences do you see when comparing these trends with other schools or communities?	To explore and understand Central High School's dual credit programs, their benefits, and the disparities reflected in course enrollment data.
3. *Differential Youth and Staff Dreams* ● What differences do you notice between the dreams and aspirations of students and school staff? ● How might these differences impact your child's educational journey?	To examine and reflect on the differences in aspirations and expectations as revealed in the data from staff and students, with the goal of understanding how these differing perspectives may influence students' access to dual credit opportunities.
4. *Student Voices on Dual Credit* ● What are your thoughts on the student interview data presented? ● How do these findings compare with your own child's experiences or those of other students you know?	To provide parents with an opportunity to reflect on student perspectives and compare these insights with their own experiences, encouraging a deeper understanding of the factors influencing dual credit participation.
5. *Reviewing Key Recommendations* ● Do you feel that I have accurately captured your perspectives and recommendations? ● Are there any other recommendations or changes that we can suggest?	To verify the accuracy and relevance of the recommendations generated by parents, ensuring that they are aligned with the community's needs and are actionable.
6. *Logistical Planning* ● How should we organize the presentation of recommendations?	To organize and plan the presentation of recommendations to select school officials, addressing logistical details

	such as presentation format, roles, and timing.
7. Centering Family Voices & Expertise - How can we ensure that our voices and expertise are valued and considered in the implementation of these recommendations? - What support do we need from school staff to move forward?	To share and discuss the implementation of recommendations with select school staff, emphasizing the importance of centering family voices and expertise in the process.
8. Family Reflections and Learnings - What impact do you think our recommendations will have on dual credit access at Central High School? - What is the power of coming together and pooling our expertise and knowledges?	To reflect on the collective power and knowledge of the group, considering the potential impact of their recommendations on creating a more equitable dual credit agenda at Central High School.