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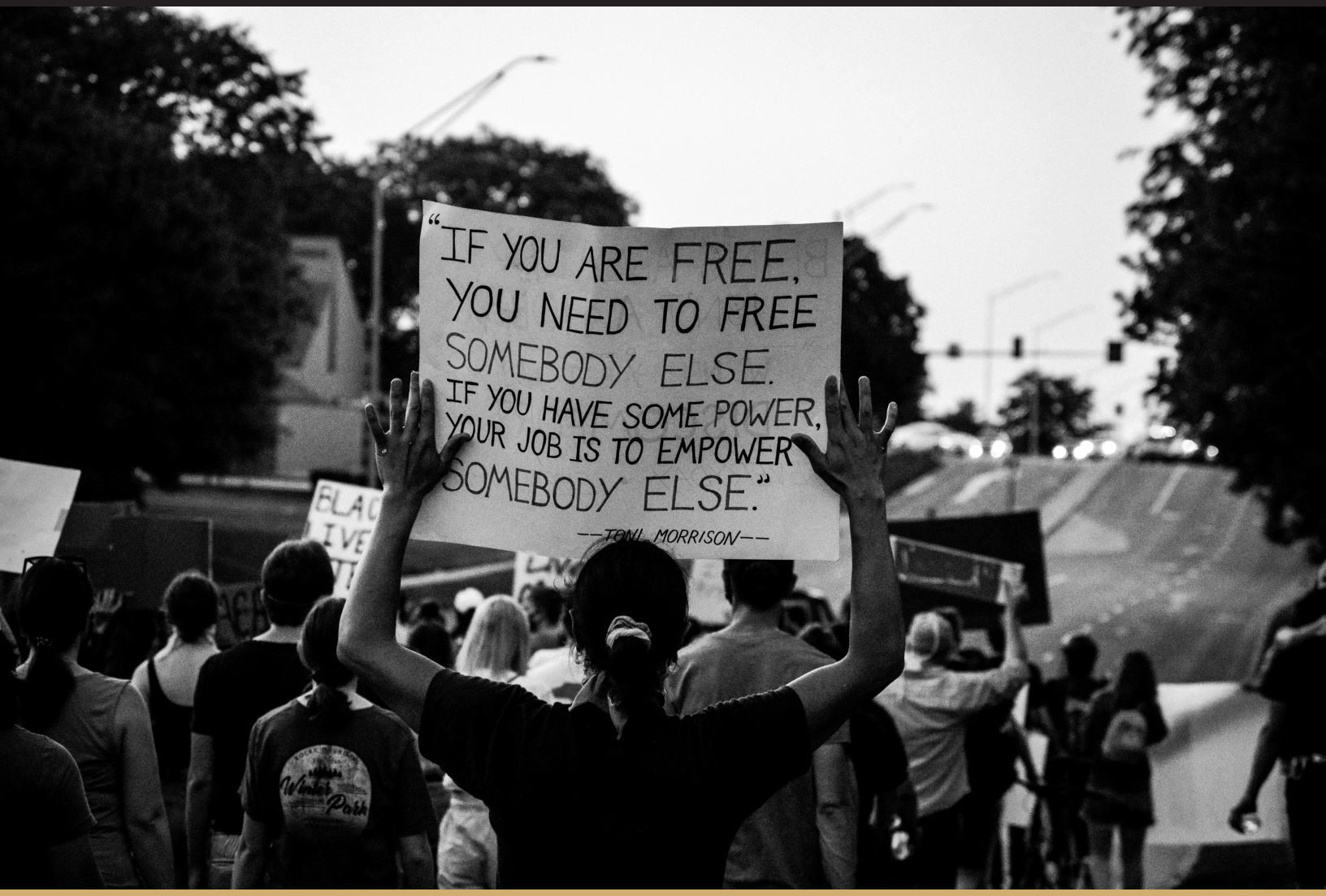
Understanding & Dismantling Privilege



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the other person within the context of a society that privileges some identities over others" (Rowe, 2008).

Limitations of the Reparative Response Model

The CPR model is intended to guide individuals through a sequential series of decisions, to diffuse defensiveness, to intentionally choose words and actions to demonstrate that they take responsibility for committing a racial microaggression, and to seek to repair the harm that they caused. However, it is not a script. While examples of reparative responses are offered in Table 1, the responses must be based on the microaggressor's sincere feelings of humility and an honest desire to apologize and repair the harm that was caused. The conversations need to be customized so that they respond to the unique situations and relationships. In past trainings, participants have often sought examples of specific words, disclosing that they "just want to say the right thing" or they "don't want to make it worse." Practicing the CPR Model in trainings, or with colleagues or friends before it needs to be used in a response to committing a racial microaggression is often helpful for individuals to gain confidence in using the CPR Model in an authentic way. Practicing the three steps also helps individuals develop emotional skills of being able to tolerate discomfort and override the brain's automatic defensiveness that often make these situations worse. Using the CPR Model does not ensure that there will be repair, that the person harmed by the microaggression will feel they were able to move towards healing, or that the person who committed a microaggression will have a comfortable sense of closure after the interaction. It is useful as a guide, but not to be seen as a guarantee for any outcome.

We are offering the CPR Model as a communication tool. It is not an intervention that has been tested or developed into some type of measurement. Evaluation feedback results have demonstrated that participants who have learned the CPR Model find it overwhelmingly useful. Future research could include testing the applications of the CPR Model and measuring behavior change or other outcomes.

Other Applications

The CPR Model can be applied in many situations, including professional settings where an individual commits a microaggression in an interaction with a client, where there is a clear power differential. In those instances, additional work is needed during the Repair phase to center the needs of the harmed person. Ideally, the client should be offered options for continuing their interaction with your agency/company so that they can make choices to accommodate their safety and comfort. For example, in a healthcare setting, asking "Would you like to continue with another medical provider?" may be appropriate.

While the CPR Model was designed specifically for racial microaggressions, it has been adapted for use in trainings for application with other kinds of microaggressions – specifically, transgender and mental health microaggressions. The co-authors are in a collaborative process with colleagues and other scholars of determining whether the model applies equally as well to other kinds of microaggressions (gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.).

The CPR Model was only designed for individuals to implement after they *commit* a racial microaggression – not for individuals who are on the receiving end of a racial microaggression. BBI folx who are the *target* of a microaggression could benefit from a response model that centers their own feelings and guides them through a decision-making process for whether, when, and how to respond. Likewise, there is a demand for response models for individuals who are bystanders witnessing a microaggression occur. These response models are currently under development by the authors of this manuscript.

Responses to the CPR Model

Since implementation of the CPR model as a training tool in November 2017, more than 2000 participants to date have been trained on their ability to identify, describe, and implement the CPR Model. A sub-analysis of post-training evaluations of 269 participants who received training on and practice in the CPR Model between 2017-2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic required pausing on these trainings) rated their ability to meet the objective of practicing implementing CPR an average of 3.38 out of 4.00 on a Likert scale. Participants who responded to an open-ended question asking them to list a new fact they learned during training, replied "CPR" or "the response model" 38.2% of the time. The CPR Model was the most cited response to that question, occurring more commonly than any other category, including learning the definitions and types of microaggressions. When asked what they would do differently after the training, participants cited the CPR Model 18.6% of the time and 29.2% of the time when asked what in the training was most useful.

Sample qualitative responses about the CPR model

In response to what they found most useful, one participant replied the following: "The repair step […] was helpful - both for realizing the barriers to repair attempts (for myself) and for realizing what I need from others in their repair attempts directed at me (i.e. vulnerability, lack of expectation that I'll soothe them). Thank you." Another participant replied that the CPR Model was the most challenging part of the training for them "because it was scary and uncomfortable, which is also why I found it most useful". Another wrote: "I had participated in many 'trainings' regarding microaggressions. It was helpful to have a strategy to deal with microaggressions which focused on the injured party and didn't pander to making white people more comfortable."

Conclusion

The CPR Model supports individuals who commit racial microaggressions to recover and begin to repair the harm they have caused. The authors offer CPR as both a tool and an ongoing practice from the perspective that white supremacy needs to be fought on all levels of social systems, from micro to macro. The CPR Model is offered as one tool to address racial harm that occurs on one level – interpersonally. We theorize that the benefits of adopting the CPR Model, which supports people in centering the needs of BBI folx and to value healing and repair, could potentially occur along many social systems, as the consequences of microaggressions have been demonstrated to negatively impact BBI folx from intrapersonal levels to social indicators at macro levels of our culture (Sue, 2010). The authors recognize the continued struggle against white supremacy

requires constant evolution and commitment to rigorous self-evaluation and personal and professional growth. We are hopeful that the CPR Model is framed as one part of a larger conversation that will inevitably require adaptation and development to remain relevant to the constantly evolving fight towards racial justice. Next steps include the development of models for people from BBI communities who have experienced a microaggression and a framework for bystander intervention. This work could also be furthered by the gathering and analyzing of more information about the impacts of learning and beginning to adopt the CPR Model. Even before these steps are taken, the authors believe that the CPR Model is an effective tool aimed at addressing the harm caused by racial microaggressions.

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Privilege and Access: Latinx Families Navigating the United States Tax Credit Scholarship for School Choice

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Abstract

In the United States, providing school choice as a means of competition in K-12 education is a neoliberal goal that has gained momentum over the latter half of the twentieth century. As more states begin to experiment with school choice, families' experiences must be shared, particularly that of Latinx, whose testimonios have largely been unheard. This study explored the experiences of Latinx parents in Georgia as they moved their child(ren) from their districted public school to the private Catholic school of their choice by use of a Tax Credit Scholarship program. To better understand the system of privilege and access, Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) was employed as a theoretical framework. The findings of this study presented through critical narrative analysis demonstrate that Latinx families continue to face multiple barriers to their educational existence, and specifically as they navigate the Tax Credit Scholarship within the school choice marketplace.

Keywords: Latinx, School Choice, School Vouchers, LatCrit, Privilege, Georgia Catholic Schools

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There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process.

-- Paulo Freire

Educating a nation's citizenry is arguably one of the most critical functions of government; yet the process by which a government educates its citizenry, the curriculum inculcated to the youth, and the funds devoted to education is entrenched in political philosophies dating back as early as the Enlightenment (Aguirre, 2012; Giroux, 1983). This study sought to share the experiences of Latinx families, as they took part in Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program to move their child(ren) from their districted public school to a private Catholic school of their choice. These private Catholic schools partnered with the state's largest Student Scholarship Organization (SSO), Goal Scholarship Inc., to provide these taxpayers funds as financial aid to their families. Two research questions were posed for this study: (1) What do Latinx parents describe as the key factors that led them to participate in Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program to enroll their child(ren) in a local private school instead of the traditional public school the student would otherwise attend and (2) What are the experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school?

Latinxs are the largest non-dominant US ethnic group, composing 18.7% of the total population or over 61 million people (US Census Bureau, 2021). In this study, Latinx is used as an inclusive term that encompasses all individuals within the gender spectrum and may be interchangeable with Hispanic and Latina/o/@ to identify the same population type (Salinas & Lozano, 2019; Scharrón-del Río & Aja, 2015). Latinx refers to both genders except when specifically addressing a cisgender, self-identified man (Latino) or woman (Latina) (Milian, 2019; Martínez et al, 2023). Navigating between a Latinx culture at home and the broader U.S. "whitestream" school system (Grande, 2004; Padilla, 2001; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013), originated on the practices, principles, morals, and values of White supremacy (Urrieta Jr., 2009; Zamudio et al., 2011), Grande's (2004) argument is that "mainstream" implies "white", Urrieta (2009) uses the term "whitestream" to historically recognize and "decenter whiteness as dominant" (p. 181) and to value the non-whitestream cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) within US public schools. Many Latinx families and children may not have a critical understanding or critical language to speak about what they are living and may have mostly internalized and resisted the oppression concurrently (Martínez, 2020; Padilla, 2001; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Lured by the U.S. whitestream society of Georgia, unaware of the many centuries of conditioning, many Latinxs are unknowingly indoctrinated into the hegemony of the dominant US culture, which highlights only the history of White Anglo-American and male culture in a hetero-patriarchal, authoritarian, top-down system (McLaren, 1989; Urrieta, 2009, Martínez, 2020). Latinxs are subconsciously encouraged to ignore the language and customs of Latinx cultures and heritages; and in return, the assimilation into such surroundings helps in gaining access to a set of public and private privileges to avoid being the object of others' domination (Anderson, 2015; Padilla, 2001).

Public education in the United States was initiated and has been mostly funded by federal and state taxes since the 1830s (Giroux, 1983; Kober & Rentner, 2020). However, due in part to neoliberalism

(Gabriel et al., 2015; Zamudio & Rios, 2006), a sizeable aspect of today's education reform in the United States has been devoted to providing US American families more educational options in addition to their districted, "zoned" public school. Thus, school choice appears to be a solution for numerous families, which affords them to use taxpayer-provided funds to be applied to a private school of their choice. Although many states have adopted this neoliberal perspective, non-dominant populations do not particularly agree that it is equitable in accessing the educational marketplace (Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016, Simms & Talbert, 2019).

Although some of today's neoliberals and conservatives alike may assert that school choice is about equality (Carl, 2011; Garcia, 2018; Gooden, Jabbar, & Torres, 2016), for Southeastern states in particular, school choice was not originally or solely philosophical in nature, but it was politically practical with its foundation in white flight (Carl, 2011; Kruse, 2005). In the case of Georgia, upper-class white families fought desegregation in every way possible; creating private schools was a way of having "segregation academies," using school vouchers or "tuition grants" to assist white families in moving to segregated private schools and relying on already established private schools to further segregate themselves (Kruse, 2005). As demonstrated by this study, although not as overt, whiteness continues to have a hegemonic stronghold, through access and resources, to school choice. Today, 32 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have at least one form of private school choice, and others are currently experimenting with school choice efforts (Durrani, 2023).

The *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report was a monumental impetus for families to seek alternatives to a failing public education system. Neoliberals called for more competition and deregulation, yet the consensus was the Blaine Amendments, found in many state constitutions, which barred state support of religious education, would serve as an impediment to vouchers (needed for a true educational marketplace). It was not until the turn of the 21st century that school choice advocates found a way around the Blaine Amendment and, in the process, made it financially lucrative. As a result, support for the program can now be found on both sides of the political aisle. The mechanism enacted is known as a Tax Credit Scholarship program. By enacting Tax Credit Scholarship programs, what Welner (2008) called "kissing cousins" of voucher systems, neoliberals have successfully asserted the State does not, in fact, support religious education. It was this type of school choice program that was enacted in Georgia in 2008.

The Tax Credit Scholarship program begins by first receiving approval from Georgia's Department of Revenue to shift a portion of their state tax burden from going to the State and instead going to a Student Scholarship Organization (SSO), where individuals and businesses can send money directly to the SSO of their choice. In the process, the individual or business can identify which school(s) they want their tax dollars redirected to for student financial aid. The SSO then creates a bucket of money for each school based on the redirected tax dollars received. When the school has a family in need, the school files with the SSO to receive a portion of the funds. The SSO then sends a check to the institution for families who are moving their child(ren) from public to private schools, for financial aid. As such, this tax mechanism

ensures that tax monies never fall into the hands of the State thus avoiding any definitive critique of a separation of Church and State (Espinoza v. Montana, 2020).

Private schools have better revenues because they can use the Tax Credit Scholarship funds to offset what may have traditionally come out of the school's financial aid bucket. In addition, these families are paying a portion of the tuition and fees, as the Tax Credit Scholarship funds do not cover a school's full tuition and fees. For the families, they are receiving additional financial aid, which makes a private education much more affordable. For the State and public-school districts, it is a financial win because the average amount awarded to each family since its inception has been roughly 50% of the cost of the State funds per pupil, thus the popularity of school choice (GOAL Report, 202).

However, the *process* available for families to navigate, as they seek the best educational options for their children in the US, is not neutral (Freire, 1997; Henry, 2020). The privilege of and access to Catholic school education is historical, political, and often determined by economic inequalities for Latinx families (Darder, 2016). Latinxs have often viewed Catholic schools as superior, private schools, for those who can afford it, and not for the have nots. In contrast, lower-income Latinx families have often experienced exclusion from Catholic schooling (Murname et al., 2018). The status of Latinxs and their educational participation as systematically presented through a critical theoretical lens, Darder (2016) uses the concept of cultural democracy (Adams & Goldbard, 1995) as the philosophical principle necessary to start to transform the education of Latinx children within Catholic schools and other private entities. The Church proclamations offered by Pope Francis were intended to help revolutionize the labor of the Catholic Church and Catholic education to engage with the pedagogical needs of Latinx communities (Darder, 2016). It was not intended to be a recipe or prescription for how emancipatory education (Martínez et al., 2015; West, 1993; 2023) may look, but rather how all teachers, educators, scholars, and religious leaders can consider the culturally democratic dimension necessary for structural changes required to provide educational justice for Latinx and all students (Martínez et al., 2023; Darder, 2016).

Researchers have demonstrated that school choice is rife with greater societal issues such as race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Simms & Talbert, 2019), socioeconomics (Delgado & Palacios, 1975; Rowe & Lubieski, 2017), and geography (Bell, 2007; Taylor Haynes, Phillips, & Goldring, 2010). Despite a rise in both school choice efforts and Latinx enrollment in schools, there is a gap in the literature as to how Latinx parents are participating in and experiencing school choice options (Gooden et al., 2016; Mavrogordato & Harris, 2017; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016; Sattin-Bajaj, 2015; Taylor Haynes et al., 2010).

Theoretical Underpinnings

As both federal and state policymakers evaluate the merits of school choice legislation, it is prudent to look beyond economic theory or budgetary constraints and focus on the constituents' experiences (Aguirre, 2012). However, major concerns with this focus are whose *testimonios will* be heard, and whose experiences will be seen. As a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) community, Latinxs navigate social institutions, such as private education and/or school choice, which were not created with

them in mind, in different ways than the dominant US culture (Yosso, 2005). These communities' *testimonios* and experiences must be recognized if we want equitable opportunities for diverse stakeholders.

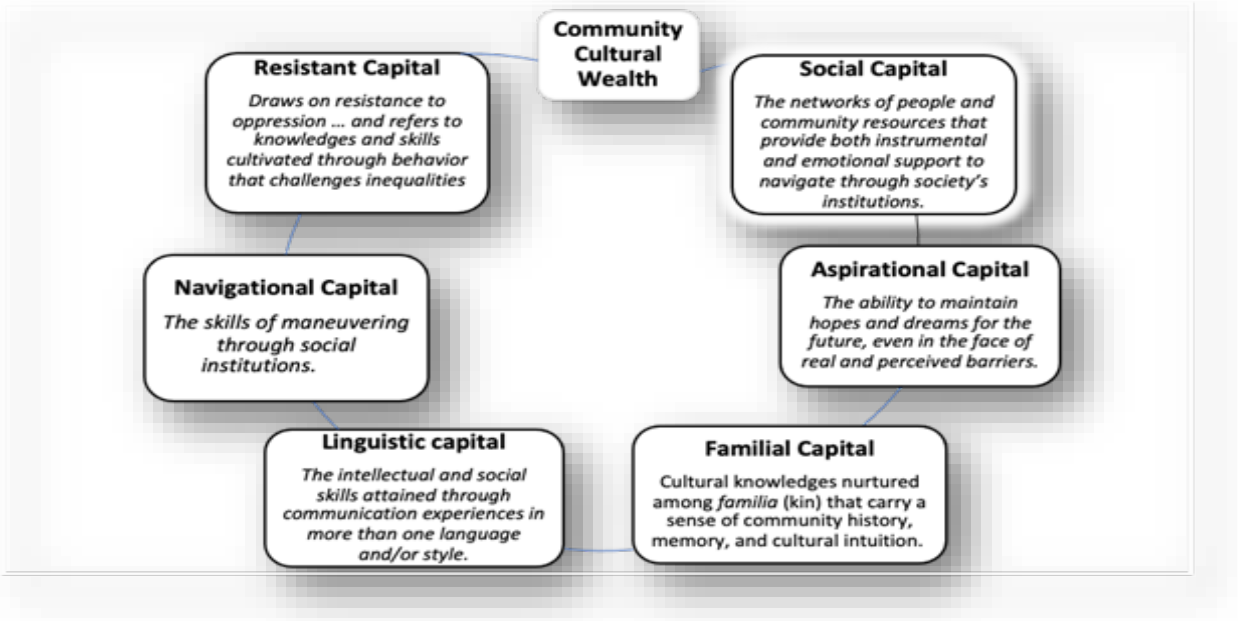
To make possible a race-center focus on Latinx families with teacher-educator knowledge(s) and understandings about their work and lives, autobiographies and personal or professional histories, this study was grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets of (1) race and racism centrality; (2) challenge to racial objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, and equal opportunity; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) experiential knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) people, and (5) an amalgamation of transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Due to the specific interests in addressing School Choice and the GA Tax Credit Scholarship for Latinxs in Georgia, we leaned on the evolved concepts of CRT to include Latinx experiences, namely that of LatCrit.

We landed in LatCrit as a result of unpacking CRT (Zamudio et al., 2011) and finding resonance with the critical counter stories of Latinxs known as *testimonios*. While it is understood that not all Latinxs seek a private education, this study illuminates the individual and family stories of Latinxs who have a critical counter story of their school choice experience (Horne, 2022). These critical counter stories illustrate who they are, how they came to be, what they believe, and how they think regarding being a Latinx parent and/or student within the 21st Century educational school system in the USA. LatCrit theory is combined in the counter stories to elucidate Latinxs' multidimensional identities and to address the intersectionality of racism between and among gender, ethnicity, culture, language, and social class (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 2002). We use CRT counter stories and LatCrit *testimonios* as methods of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized Latinx families, challenging the majoritarian stories that omit and distort the histories and realities of oppressed people (Urrieta & Villenas, 2013; Villenas, 1996), particularly those who identify as Latinx (Martínez, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rios, 2008).

School choice: Assets and barriers to Tax Credit Scholarship for Latinx in the US

Due to sociohistorical injustices experienced by Latinx in the United States, Latinxs utilize and rely on community cultural wealth (CCW) to navigate much of society (Yosso, 2005). CCW refers to the accumulated cultural assets and resources a community uses to increase wealth (Yosso, 2005). According to Yosso, CCW also includes socially intangible assets existing in various forms. Figure 1 defines various assets of CCW.

Figure 1
Assets of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).



In fact, Yrigollen-Robbins (2022) documents how Latinx families in Georgia use CCW to navigate through different socioeconomic struggles in both local schools and communities. However, CCW is limited, particularly regarding school choice, due in part to overt practices embedded in white privilege and antiimmigrant policies (Aguirre, 2012; Leonardo, 2013).

Previous research indicates that despite CCW efforts, economic, socio-lingual, and political structures in the United States impede Latinxs from maximizing their potential to participate in school choice initiatives (Darder, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Barriers such as (a) issues related to low socioeconomic status, which affect the affordability of transportation, food, clothing, and extracurricular associated expenses (Joseph et al., 2017; Taylor Haynes et al., 2010; Waitoller & Super, 2017), (b) issues related to English-only approaches which may inhibit limited-English speaking parents' access to resources and engagement at school (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005; Hill & Torres, 2010; Sattin-Bajaj, 2015), and (c) Latinx families' documentation status, which may deter them from interacting with government agencies or institutions due to distrust (Cross et al. 2019; Yoshikawa, 2011). Collectively, these and other barriers may serve to avert Latinx families from utilizing school choice.

Methodology

This qualitative study uses critical narrative inquiry (CNI) to best share the experiences of seven Latinx families with school choice. Kim (2016) described narrative inquiry as "a way of understanding human experience through stories that, in turn, help us better understand the human phenomena and human existence" (p. 324). The narrative inquiry approach allows the

researcher to tell the stories of the participants (Clandinin, 2013). However, CNI draws on LatCrit to tell counterstories, which allow the Latinx *testimonios* to be heard and to "destroy the mindset," and "subvert that ingroup reality," of dominant groups, with the goal to "construct a new world richer" than the one we have (Delgado, 1989, pp. 2413-15).

Recruitment of participants

CNI research can have as few as one participant, however, for this study, multiple participants were sought to gain varied experiences. Thus, a list of Catholic schools that used the student scholarship organization (SSO), GOAL Scholarship Inc., was solicited. The only Catholic schools that use GOAL Scholarship Inc. were independent Catholic schools. Independent Catholic schools are those run by monastic orders and are independent of Diocesan control (Guernsey & Barott, 2008). Only six catholic schools met the criteria. As such, the gatekeepers, often the heads of school, were contacted through email and phone calls. For this study, school heads from three different geographic areas in Georgia agreed to participate.

To recruit parents for the study, the heads of school disseminated a recruitment flyer to parents. The recruitment flyer was written in English and Spanish, and it offered a donation toward their child's tuition to encourage participation in the study. Seven parents showed interest, shared their email with school administrators and then with the researcher. Parents were then contacted to confirm they understood the study and to answer any questions. Parents were given the option to meet virtually or in person for the interviews.

Data Collection

In a narrative research approach, individual lives serve as the primary source of data (Bloom, 2002; Patton, 2015). As such, the semi-structured interviews utilized an interview protocol with open-ended questions to allow the participants to provide their *testimonios*, enhancing the use of in-vivo coding (Patton, 2015). We used Seidman's (2013) approach, which included a total of three 90-minute interviews over a three-month timeframe. Table 1 provides the goal of each interview and sample interview questions. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, via in-person interviews, digital platforms, and telephone. Interviews with the participants, who solely spoke Spanish, were conducted with the assistance of a Spanish-speaking colleague.

Table 1

Goals and Sample Questions for Each Interview

Interview	Goal	Sample Interview Questions
1	Focused Life History	Tell me about how your own educational experiences relate or were counter to your child(ren)'s.
2	Details of Experience	Reflecting on this experience, what, if any, challenges did you face as a Latina/o family?
3	Reflection on Meaning	Given what you said in our previous interviews, how do you explain/reflect upon your experience of moving your child(ren) from public to private schools with assistance from the GOAL scholarship?

Data Analysis

Patton (2015) best summarized what is sought in narrative analysis: "The central idea of narrative analysis remains, that stories offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings when understood and analyzed as narratives (p. 128). A total of 15 interviews were conducted, with six interviews translated to English, transcribed by Wreally Studios, and uploaded to MAXQDA for data analysis. The method of narrative analysis that appeared most logical for this study was Polkinghorne's narrative mode of analysis (also called "narrative analysis"). Kim (2016) added an additional type of paradigmatic analysis following Polkinghorne's lead, one that is "derived from a predetermined foci of one's study" (p. 335). This was employed to sort through the data to further identify categories and concepts. For example, participants' excerpts were categorized by their use of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW). Two cycles of coding were employed: in-vivo coding and subsequently focused coding. In-vivo coding was employed for the first cycle of coding to most accurately capture the words, phrases, and meanings of the participants in their own voices rather than those developed by the researchers. In-vivo coding was used, and each line of text was interpreted and coded as needed (Saldaña, 2016). In-vivo coding was selected specifically to provide a platform for this marginalized community using their own *testimonios*. Focused coding was then employed to pinpoint the most frequent or significant codes. Utilizing MAXQDA, data analysis continued, comparing the new focused codes across the participants' data and assessing comparability and transferability (Saldaña, 2016). Codes emerging from the data were then categorized and emergent themes were noted.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researchers bring their own biases to a study (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). As the lead researcher, I am a White male, non-Latino, non-Spanish-speaking principal of a Catholic high school in Georgia. My academic institution uses the GOAL scholarship for families who enroll from public schools. As an educator, I have worked with countless students who were only able to attend my institution because of the financial assistance given to their families. Matias (2022), drawing on her Catholic background, calls for researchers to identify "the atrocities of whiteness in ways that stops masking as innocence, ignorance, or unintentionality" (p. 8). As a Catholic, my religious convictions dictate that I am to care for those marginalized in my community and highlight the barriers to their access and the role privilege plays in discouraging their access to a government-sponsored program.

Like everyone, despite grand intentions (Leonardo, 2013), I have my own beliefs and possible biases about school choice. Nevertheless, for this study, I sought to ensure the participants' experiences speak for themselves. The open-ended interview questions were crafted to allow their *testimonios* to establish the narrative, regardless of what researcher biases I brought to the study. However, to keep personal biases at bay, reflective memos were used during the data collection and analysis process and Latinx, Catholic peers, and co-researchers to review study findings (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021).

Findings

In this section, demographic information of participants, followed by three emergent themes, presented as narratives, gathered from data analysis are shared. LatCrit was employed in the narratives to tell families' counter stories with navigating Georgia's school choice in Catholic schools.

Participant Demographics

Table 2 provides demographic information of the Catholic schools. All three schools are college preparatory schools located in the state of Georgia.

Table 2

Composition of Participant Catholic Schools

School	Century Founded	County Population [a]	Student Population/ Grades Served	Gender Designation	Tuition Cost (Approx $)
A	21st	<150,000	200/9-12	Co-Ed	10,000
B	20th	<300,000	400/9-12	Single Sex [b]	15,000
C	20th	>1,000,000	500/PK-12	Co-Ed	5,000-25,000

Note. [a] Population is based on the April 1, 2020, U.S. Census Data.
[b]Single sex refers to cisgender male and female.

As Milian (2019) indicates, the Latinx population is quite diverse and any attempts to narrow down such a diverse group haves been problematic. Participant demographics in Table 3 provide a more in-depth understanding of who these participants were and are not attached to which Catholic school their child(ren) attended to ensure their identities are concealed (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021).

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Demographic Information
María	Female (32); First-generation American of Mexican descent; married; dropped out in 11th grade; mother of four children.
Fernando and Daniela	Male (41) and female (39); Mexican; married; high school education; parents of three children.
Sebastián and Antonela	Male (50) and female (48); Mexican; married; one completed graduate school, the other completed high school; parents of three children.
Gabriela	Female (53); Peruvian; single; high school education; mother to one child.
Isabela	Female (35); Mexican; married; associate degree; mother of two children.

Emergent Narratives

From the data, three narratives emerged as commonalities in the participants' experiences. Each narrative provides context to the participant's experience(s) and answers the research questions to shed further light on this community.

Narrative 1: Dissatisfaction with Public Education

Participant dissatisfaction with their assigned public school emerged from the data analysis. It should have been expected that the participants of this study were unhappy with their districted public school(s), which led to their consideration of private education. All participants expressed what they perceived as a better educational opportunity for their child(ren). This should not come as a surprise, since to be considered a participant, the family already had to make the transition to a private school of their choice. Negative rumors about their children's public schooling or personal experiences drove these families to seek out an educational alternative. Georgia, like other states, has government accountability offices, in addition to the state's Department of Education (DOE), that publish school districts' data for the public. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) retrieves data from the DOE and ranks each school and district on a 0–100-point scale. Ranking includes content mastery, progress, closing gaps, readiness, and graduation rates. Out of the five families, all but one family lived within a school district that was given a rating of 71 or below out of 100 by GOSA; one family lived in a district that was given an 85; two families lived in a district that was given a 71 and two families lived in a district that was given a 66 (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2021).

Shifting from whatever parents hear about their districted public schools anecdotally, based on the quantitative score of each participant's school district, their concerns appear to be justified. Of course, as demonstrated by Valencia (2010), we know that low socioeconomic and CLD students often find themselves in "At-Risk Schools" where inequities in teacher quality and funding are significant (pp. 117-125). What is important is why these Latinx parents became unhappy or were worried about what the future in their assigned public schools may entail. Consistently, each family mentioned that their districted public school classroom dynamics caused them concern, which prompted them to look elsewhere. Individually, participants also stated negative views of student behavior at their districted public school, an inability on the teachers' part to form meaningful relationships with their students, worry about their child(ren)'s academic future, and disappointment with a lack of any religious guidance (or morals).

Narrative 2: Challenge(s) With the GOAL Scholarship

Data analysis supports that the primary challenge facing Latinx parents is being aware of the GOAL Scholarship Inc. or other student scholarship organizations providing financial assistance. None of the participants was aware of the financial aid enabled through Georgia's Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit legislation before embarking on this journey. To successfully navigate a marketplace, one has to know the options available to them in the first place. The next excerpts highlight participants' experiences with this process. *Inadequate guidance*. As with study participants, the first-place parents often looked to for guidance is their local parish Catholic church. Regarding the school

choice legislation or the GA Tax Credit Scholarship program, participant Isabela suggests that local parishes "[distribute] it...or get more flyers about what or where the scholarship is in both of the languages, English and Spanish." Gabriela felt it was the Church's responsibility to "…get information [out] about the affordability of private education." She further explained there should be a designated person to speak about the program "because people still believe that they can't afford [tuition] and don't have all the information." "We need this because it's good stuff," said Sebastián. He argued that the program needs to have better marketing through the churches or on television.

To better understand this experience, I asked María to walk through the application process as when she was a new parent to her school. María's experience with locating a Spanish version for an online admission application at her school pointedly shows this was difficult. When asked, María shared that she was not aware of a Spanish version of the online application. I, too, attempted to locate an online Spanish application to no avail. I then contacted the school personnel and they shared that they "dug deeper" and finally found the button for a Spanish-translated application. This experience shows challenges with access to information, particularly for families with limited English language and/or technology skills. Thus, a complicated process is likely to deter families from using it.

Issues with Documentation. For many people who apply for financial aid to attend college, the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) application is a great deal of stress. One can only imagine how difficult it might be trying to complete a FAFSA in a foreign language, or for undocumented families who may have limited literacy or need verification papers (Graves, 2022). For study participants applying for financial aid, this was the first time they were asked to provide so much documentation for something of this magnitude. "It was things I either didn't have or that I did not quite understand what they were looking for," said Gabriela. Many of the requested documents for financial aid are like those required for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

When applying for financial assistance, many participants commented on the number of documents required to receive it. "They would ask for stuff that I didn't have," said María. "The paperwork was a lot," said Fernando and Daniela, "it took a couple of months [to complete the paperwork]." Sebastián lamented that "They asked for like 20 forms. It took me two or three hours to complete the whole thing because it asked for so much personal information. In the application, they ask a lot of questions that I didn't have the immediate answer to."

Financial aid forms use specific financial language that can be challenging to many parents, particularly for those who are not English proficient. Study participants noted the challenges in the process for navigating financial aid applications in English. Participant Fernando shared, "It can be difficult for those who don't speak English, because the papers are, at least the ones we saw, in English [only]." Similarly, Sebastián expressed the concern that other Latinx people he knows may be able to speak both languages but cannot read either of the languages. Sebastian shared that "So, if they can't read it in Spanish, it is easy for them to quit applying because they don't understand what they are reading." Echoing concern for a language barrier, Gabriela stated, "You know Latin American Spanish-

speaking families are afraid to ask questions because of the language barrier. They're not only afraid to ask the questions but also afraid of what the answer might be. There's a fear with the language barrier."
All study participants mentioned being helped through the financial aid application process by the school's financial aid personnel, but Isabela cautioned, "If they don't know the [English] language, they need to find an interpreter." Isabela mentioned several times that her proficiency in the English language was an advantage in this process. However, she worried that some of her community members, who may not be English proficient, would be dissuaded by being overwhelmed or by fear of the outcome being a denial of assistance. An additional concern posed by Sebastián was about his friends who worked jobs that only paid in cash. These friends would be, in his eyes, declined from receiving financial assistance from the GOAL scholarship. Sebastián shared that one of his friends "...can't prove his income because they only pay him in cash. I remember that was a challenge for his family [for seeking financial assistance]." Lamenting his friends' lack of options, knowing that an income tax form was a requirement, Sebastián believed his friends' children were permanently stuck in their districted public schools. Lastly, none of the participants recalled any additional requirements to continue to receive scholarship funds other than maintaining their children's enrollment (such as good grades and good conduct). GOAL Scholarship Inc. allows each school to use its own financial aid process but does give guidance on award amounts.

When asked about their reflections or recommendations as the participants who have successfully navigated their school's Tax Credit Scholarship process, participants in this study found the process through the GOAL scholarship cumbersome. Most participants indicated a concern for other Latinx families who may struggle with the Tax Credit Scholarship process even more than they did. The concerns were about the use of financial aid English-only documents, the possibility of not being able to procure certain financial documents that were requested, and challenges with bi-illiteracy in English and Spanish. These challenges, as articulated by participants, with drawing on school choice to finance their children's education stand as barriers to their participation in Catholic schools.

Narrative 3: Continued Aspects of Community Cultural Wealth

In the face of barriers to accessing this marketplace, several forms of the participants' communities' cultural wealth (CCW) were notable in data analysis. Embedded in participants' *testimonios* was their overall reliance on social and familial capital. However, prominent forms of capital in data analysis were aspirational, social, navigational, and linguistic. Excerpts below demonstrate participant's use of CCW.

Aspirational capital. All participants in this study demonstrated aspirational capital in various ways. Yosso (2005) defined aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). The most obvious aspiration for participants was seeking what they perceived as their child(ren)'s best education, that in their eyes, would lead to future prosperity in the form of a good career. In other ways, the participants sacrificed their hopes, aspirations, and dreams for their child(ren). For example, Sebastián remained in the US, sacrificing

his career as a medical doctor back home in México. Similarly, Gabriela quit a more lucrative, but time-consuming job, and began working as an Uber driver so that she was able to "be more responsible and attentive" to her daughter.

A few of the participants mentioned their ongoing belief in the US as a country of opportunity. María described herself navigating through her son's schooling options as her trying to "…have like that American life" and impart to her son "the American dream." Fernando and Daniela described the US as "a country of your dreams." In reflecting on her own experiences, Isabela shared she always kept her children in mind and "tried to do the best I can for my children." Participants see themselves as attempting to live the "American Dream" by seeking to set their child(ren) up with a better opportunity in life than they themselves had.

Reflecting on how her experience navigating school choice also reflects on her life as a Latina parent in the United States, María lamented how many within the Latinx community "don't have people around them to talk to them and tell them, this is an opportunity…this is a door opener." Having limited experience(s) being shared within a community may lead to less fruitful outcomes for Latinx families. Sebastián answered the same question by saying, "Well, at a certain point, you feel like you've been discriminated [against]." Sebastián was expressing a feeling of isolation as a Latino parent. His focus was on the disadvantage he felt not being able to speak English fluently had on his own experiences.

Navigational Capital. Yosso (2005) defined navigational capital as "skills of maneuvering through social institution" (p. 80). The participants of this study cited the help of other Latinx parents, the assistance of school personnel, and English proficiency as forms of navigational capital that helped them successfully navigate their way into and through Georgia's complex school choice options. Isabela, Gabriela, and Sebastián and Antonela all mentioned their local Catholic Church as being a central location for Latinx families to share their experiences with one another and for the dissemination of information about the financial aid provided by Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program. Knowing that Catholic Church is often a place for fellowship, it follows that the social capital used to navigate society's institutions, in this case education, may be widely shared among parishioners.

Linguistic capital. Yosso (2005) defined linguistic capital as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 78). The participants had to navigate life within the US for many years prior to their experiences navigating school choice. For each participant, proficiency in the English language was seen as a necessary skill to successfully navigate Georgia's school choice options. Sebastián described his experience as "…hard because I have to learn more about this language." Isabela described navigating school choice as "…challenging sometimes. I would say for a Latina that doesn't know the [English] language, it will be more challenging, but, with me, I know English, so that kind of helped me out there." Even those participants not proficient in English, like Gabriela, worried that without the information being translated into Spanish, other Latinx families would be left behind. As immigrants, Fernando and Daniela had a history of navigational capital to find success in the US. For instance, to navigate

school choice, they had to rely on their son and friends because "It can be difficult for those who don't speak English."

Regardless of the degree of English proficiency, participant experiences show that they persisted in addressing the inherent English-only barriers in navigating school choice. They used several forms of social capital to successfully navigate Georgia's school choice marketplace. As demonstrated by Thorsos, Martínez, and Gabriel (2020), US schools and society have historically devalued any primary language other than English. This theme demonstrates a continuation of the implicit/explicit supremacy of the English language felt by the Latinx community as recounted by Martínez (2020). Experiencing the privilege given to the English language continuous to sustain internalized oppression among the Latinx community as demonstrated by Padilla (2001).

Discussion

Elected representatives have debated Georgia's educational system and based on neoliberal principles, decided to enable a broader educational marketplace for *all* (emphasis added) their citizenry. However, the process is not neutral. The Latinx community in Georgia faces continued barriers to their access into the marketplace, based largely upon privilege, that members of the dominant group possess.

The goal of this critical narrative study was to bring to light the experiences of Latinx parents as they navigate Georgia's private school choice initiative enabled through the Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program legislation. Using LatCrit as a theoretical framework, the researcher sought to answer two questions: (1) What do Latinx parents describe as the key factors that led them to participate in Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program to enroll their child(ren) in a local private school instead of the traditional public school the student would otherwise attend? and (2) What are the experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school?

Analysis of interview data shows four factors that led participants to seek a Catholic school as an alternative to public school. According to participants, those factors were their negative views of student behavior at their districted public school, an inability on the teachers' part to form meaningful relationships with students, worry about their child(ren)'s academic future, and disappointment with a lack of any religious guidance or religious-based morals. Collectively, these factors demonstrate participants' dissatisfaction with their districted public schools. These feelings of dissatisfaction could only have been exacerbated by the GOSA low ratings of their child(ren)'s schools.

Dissatisfied with their districted public schools, participants sought a Catholic school alternative. In their exploration, participants became aware of the financial aid provided by Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarship program. Ultimately, this additional financial aid assisted them in enrolling their child(ren) at their local Catholic school. However, they came to learn of the challenges associated with the application process to receive the funds. The experiences of Latinx parents in receiving and maintaining their child's voucher for initial and continued enrollment in private school were frustrating.

Participants expressed initial frustration with the lack of knowledge about the

scholarship funds. In addition, the size and scope of the required documents whereas intimidating for all participants, but especially for non-English speaking parents who had to complete the documentation in English. For participants facing aspects of a societal institution created without them in mind, privilege and access possibly served as deterrents to their equal opportunity in taking advantage of a private school education (Jenkins, 2016). However, participants made use of their Community Cultural Wealth to navigate the Tax Credit Scholarship program, though their child's continued enrollment was performance-based and other information relating to the scholarship award was concealed.

Although one may look at the conclusion as the end of one's research study, this is not the end. Clandinin (2013) best summarizes the journey taken during this research study: "Of course, for narrative inquirers, exit is never a final exit. We continue to carry long-term relational responsibilities for participants, for ourselves, and for the work we have done together…narrative inquiry always begins and ends in the midst of ongoing experiences" (p. 44). The Latinx families who were given a platform for their *testimonios* to be heard and experiences to be seen are not exiting. On the contrary, their role in ongoing research is growing. In this sense, critical researchers like me, and many others will continue to shine a brighter light on this community, one so bright that they can no longer be ignored.

Implications and Recommendations

Elected representatives have the responsibility to determine whether legislative programs effectively address the needs of all their constituents. As demonstrated through this study, the Latinx community is largely unaware of the financial assistance entitled to them. Few aspects are as crucial for state legislators as education; they must tirelessly work to ensure equal access to Georgia's school marketplace for all communities. This study corroborates previous research that Latinx parents are struggling with English-only documentation, and English proficiency is impacting their participation in school choice (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005; Joseph et al., 2017; Mavrorgato & Harris, 2017).

As a nation without an official language, linguistic discrimination should not happen in the United States. Spanish far exceeds other non-English languages spoken in American households, accounting for almost 62% of foreign language speakers and close to 30 million people (Deshmukh, 2021). Furthermore, Latinx families are the second largest group enrolling in Catholic schools (NCES, 2019, Ospino & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2016). Thus, providing services in both English and Spanish to Latinx families regarding financial aid is warranted if legislators and Catholic schools seek democratic educational opportunities for all (Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2021).

As demonstrated by Ospino and Weitzel-O'Neill (2016), successful communication between Latinx families and schools is paramount. Catholic schools should seek to provide workshops focused on informing parents and helping them complete forms with the aid of interpreters. Additionally, schools should use CCW affinity groups made up of parents who have already navigated this complex process to share their experiences and possibly even seek opportunities to serve as intermediaries between private schools seeking to educate Latinx children and the

Latinx families who may be cautious to enter this marketplace (Jenkins, 2016; Mavrogordato & Stein, 2016). Similarly, as diversity, equity, and inclusion coordinators initiate needed reforms for private schools, an additional focus of DEI efforts should be on liaising with parents.

Lastly, within Catholic schools, school leaders should make a concerted effort to increase the engagement of the Latinx community. A first step is recruiting Spanish speakers on the school staff (Simonds et al., 2022). Additionally, a key initiative must be ensuring Latinx representation within school committees, in leadership positions, and as school board members. Latinx community members can share valuable input and enact initiatives that directly address privilege and access. They can also provide representative *testimonios* for the Latinx community and what matters to them (Ospino & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2016). Ultimately, through a "spirit of protest," the Church must ignite a reawakening of Catholic education to create conditions favorable to the full participation of the Latinx community (Darder, 2016, p. 45).

Concluding Critical Thoughts

This research study questioned whether the narrative surrounding non-dominant participation in the neoliberal school marketplace is as good as it is being sold. Research indicates that education can have a powerful, transformational impact on students (Easton-Brooks et al., 2022); however, we found that Latinx families struggle navigating within the US privilege and access apparatus set up to enable a larger school marketplace that excludes them. Despite the grand intentions of Georgia's Qualified Education Tax Credit Scholarship program to assist families for whom private schools were inaccessible due to cost (Suitts, 2011, p. 8), the interviews indicate that for this mission to succeed, barriers to culturally and linguistically diverse communities must be dismantled (Valencia, 2010). Beyond merely listening to Latinx *testimonios* as active participants in Georgia's school choice marketplace, we observe these families pursuing the "American Dream" (Martínez, 2016; 2022). Their aspiration is to provide a better situation for their children than they themselves had or currently have. By acknowledging Latinxs' dissatisfaction with their districted public school(s), we recognize their participation in an institution initially created without consideration for their needs. Lower-income Latinx families have experienced exclusion from participating in Catholic schooling (Murname et al., 2018). Acritical theoretical lens of their systemic educational participation must use cultural democracy (Adams & Goldbard, 1995) and the Church proclamations offered by Pope Francis (Darder, 2016) to revolutionize the labor of the Catholic Church and Catholic education. Engagement with the pedagogical needs of Latinx communities can then start the transformation of the education of Latinx children within Catholic schools and other private entities (Darder, 2016). This is not a recipe or prescription for how emancipatory education (Gabriel et al., 2015; West, 1993; 2023) may look, but rather how all teachers, educators, scholars, and religious leadership can consider the culturally democratic dimension necessary for the structural changes required to provide educational justice for Latinx families and all students (Martínez et al.,2023; Darder, 2016). Therefore, beyond just sending "love and prayers" for Latinx families' oppressive educational experiences, "may you continue to have the strength and courage to bear witness to racial reality, bringing a piece of

heaven to this hellish world" (Matias, 2022, p. 8).

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