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Chicas fuertes: Counterstories of Latinx parents raising strong girls

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ABSTRACT
In this article, I explore the narratives and experiences of four Latinx mothers and fathers, Alma, Rose, Valente and Samuel, who participated with their adolescent daughters (grades nine-10), Blanca, Elizabeth, Rocky and Reyna in Somos Escritores/We are Writers writing workshops. Somos Escritores was a family engagement space, created with and for Latinx mothers and fathers and their adolescent daughters, that invited families to draw, write and share stories from their lived experiences. Workshops were designed with and for Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters to open space for the intergenerational exchange of stories and experiences within a political context that continuously and increasingly works to silence and control their voices and experience. Drawing upon written narratives, interview transcripts and ethnographic field notes, I provide insights into the ways that these parents are raising their daughters to be “chicas fuertes/strong girls.” Through the sharing of consejos, stories, and experiences – their “pedagogies of the home,” (Delgado Bernal, 2001), these parents provide their daughters with strategies and tools to navigate their daily lives, including their personal, social and academic worlds, while ensuring that they stay connected to their familial, cultural and linguistic roots.

KEYWORDS
family engagement; intergenerational storytelling; Latina girls; Latinx parents; writing

Introduction
Yo creo en si mismo [y] en mi familia. Creo en si mismo porque Dios me guía, me da sabiduría para seguir adelante y saber y tener confianza que mañana será un día mejor. Creo en mi familia porque ellos son mi pilar, son mi soporte, son mis felicidad, por los cuales me hacen sentir fuerte y seguir adelante porque siento ser su ejemplo.” (“I believe in myself and in my family, I believe in myself because God guides me, gives me wisdom to continue forward and know and feel confidence that tomorrow will be a better day. I believe in my family because they are my pillar of support, they are my happiness, who make me feel strong and continue forward because I feel I am their example.”) (Valente, father writer, Somos Escritores)

On a Tuesday night in late July 2016, Valente, an immigrant from Honduras and father of 14-year-old Rocky, stands up from his chair at a Somos Escritores/We are Writers writing workshop to read his piece, “This I believe/Esto Yo Creo.” In his writing, Valente draws upon the strength and knowledges that reside in his cultural, linguistic, and familial resources (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Yosso, 2005) to share the truths that he holds dear to his heart.

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Tracey T. Flores is an assistant professor of language and literacy in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a former English Language Development (ELD) and English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, working for eight years alongside culturally and linguistically diverse students and families in schools throughout Glendale and Phoenix, Arizona. Her research focuses on Latina mothers’ and daughters’ language and literacy practices and on family literacy, specifically family writing, as a springboard for advocacy, empowerment, and transformation for students, families, and teachers.
Valente and his fellow writers reside in Arizona, a state in the southwestern part of the United States with a history of anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant policies and laws (Abrego & Menjívar, 2011; Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012). These policies and laws work to silence and control the voices and experiences of Latinx parents and their families while framing them as “lacking” or “in need of (re)mediation.” However, in this space, constructed with and for Latinx mothers and fathers and their adolescent daughters, their experiential knowledge, voices, and stories are honored and celebrated.

For six weeks, four Latinx parents—Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose (all names are pseudonyms)—and their adolescent daughters—Rocky, Reyna, Blanca, and Elizabeth (Grades 9–10) participated in Somos Escritores/We are Writers creative writing workshops. Somos Escritores is a creative writing workshop for Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters (Grades 7–12) that invites them to draw, write, and share stories from their lived experiences. Workshops were designed with and for Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters to open space for the intergenerational exchange of stories and experiences. At workshops, parents and their daughters drew, wrote, and orally shared stories from their lives that addressed the stereotypes, tensions, and contradictions they navigate on a daily basis at the intersections of age, gender, race, language, and immigrant status.

As facilitator and participant observer (Spradley, 2016), I share stories from my work alongside these Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters in Somos Escritores. Drawing upon writing samples, interview transcripts, and ethnographic field notes, I provide insights into the ways that these parents are raising their adolescent daughters to be “chicas fuertes/strong girls.” Through the sharing of consejos, stories, and experiences—their “pedagogies of the home” (Delgado Bernal, 2001)—these parents are providing their daughters with strategies and tools to navigate their daily lives, including their personal, social, and academic worlds, while ensuring they stay connected to their familial, cultural, and linguistic roots. In addition, at workshops as mothers and fathers reflected on their own adolescent experiences and engaged in the reciprocal sharing of stories and learnings, their words highlighted the strength, courage, and love they draw upon to imagine for their daughters a life beyond the one that they could imagine for themselves (Collins, 1999).

Part of my work alongside Valente, Samuel, Rose, and Alma in Somos Escritores was a collective exploration of their narratives, as Latinx parents, raising their adolescent daughters at the intersections of race, class, gender, and immigrant status. I explored the following question: What can we learn from the written and oral words, stories, and experiences of Latinx mothers and fathers about who they are, what matters to them, and what they envision for their daughter’s futures? In the next section, I share what brought me to my work alongside Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters in this current project. Then I provide an overview of the theoretical framework and a brief literature review of storytelling that informs the work of Somos Escritores. Next, I describe Somos Escritores workshops and the Latinx parents and daughters who participated as writers in this space. After that, I describe my research methods, including data collection and analysis, followed by sharing of findings, and closing with discussion and a consejo (“advice”) for educators and teacher educators.

**Positionality**

My work alongside the Latinx mothers, fathers, and daughters in Somos Escritores is part of my journey from classroom teacher to doctoral student to new assistant professor. To imagine the space that would be Somos Escritores, I drew upon my own lived experiences as a second-generation Chicana growing up in a home full of stories and my new role as mother to my daughter, Milagros. In addition, my work as a classroom teacher alongside my students and their families in family writing projects (Flores & Early, 2017) was foundational in the creation of Somos Escritores.

As a young Chicana, I grew up in a home surrounded by the consejos (“advice”), dichos (“sayings”), and stories of my mother, Vivian, and her mother, my Nana Josie. Their stories were rooted in their lived experiences and realities as they experienced life at the intersections of gender, language, poverty, and race. They told me stories of overt racial and linguistic discrimination,
obstacles endured due to lack of economic resources, and the strength and solidarity of our family to work together in the face of these injustices so that there was always hope and love. From their stories, I learned of the urgency to stand up for myself and others, how to persevere in challenging situations, and the importance of family, all lessons that I have carried with me throughout my life.

Prior to entering my doctoral program, I taught for eight years in Title I, K–8 schools serving culturally and linguistically diverse students and families. As a classroom teacher, I invited my students and their families, majority Latinx and Spanish speaking, to participate in after-school family writing workshops to draw, write, and share their stories. I designed these workshops because of my belief in the power of writing to break silence, amplify voices, and build community. These workshops became a space to learn and grow together through the collective and reciprocal sharing of our stories while building strong relationships.

Based upon the stories of my childhood and my work alongside my students and families in family writing projects, I imagined and (re)imagined Somos Escritores as a space that would value and honor the experiential knowledge of Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters by placing their stories at the center of workshops. Therefore, I intentionally organized and designed workshops to welcome and invite Latinx parents and their daughters into Somos Escritores as experts of their lived realities, thus positioning them as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002) while working to disrupt traditional notions of family engagement spaces. In the next section, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework that is foundational to the creation of Somos Escritores.

Theoretical framework

This study employs a framework that brings together Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE, Delgado Bernal, 1998), Critical Race Theory (CRT, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit, Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These perspectives work together to provide a foundation for research that privileges and centers the narratives, experiential knowledge, and ways of knowing of Latinx parents and their daughters. These theories provide theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tools for listening to, understanding, and learning from the narratives of Latinx parents raising their adolescent daughters at the intersections of race, class, gender, and immigrant status, while untangling the often times silenced realities of their lived conditions. Together, these theories provided me with tools to disrupt deficit narratives of Latinx parents as “lacking” or in need of “remediation” to more expansive lenses of parenting, family, school, and discrimination.

A Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) informed the entire research process, from the questions that I posed, my work alongside Latinx parents and their daughters, to data collection and analysis. Specifically, a CFE is “concern[ed] with the knowledge about Chicanas—about who generates an understanding of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not legitimized” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 560). In addition, it emphasizes the unique knowledge and life experiences that Chicana/Latina researchers bring to their research projects. Employing a CFE provided me with tools to center and privilege the perspectives of Latinx parents and their daughters as “holders of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002), while allowing me to draw upon my own “experiential knowledge” as a Chicana educator, teacher educator, scholar, and mother.

In the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tradition, Solórzano (1998) outlines five tenets of CRT in educational research. They include: (a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective. In this study, I draw on the fourth tenant of CRT, “the centrality of experiential knowledge,” to illuminate and bring attention to the importance of drawing upon the lived realities and lived experiences of Latinx parents as valuable resources from which to begin theorizing, understanding, and learning. The “experiential knowledge” of these Latinx parents raising their adolescent daughters
in Arizona during the current historical and political moment is an important departure from dominant narratives of parents from nondominant backgrounds. CRT illuminates the cracks in the dominant ideology through counterstories and counternarratives and is evident in the stories written, told, and shared by Latinx parents and their daughters in Somos Escritores.

LatCrit extends the tenets of CRT to move beyond binaries in discussions of oppression to examine and critique the gendered and racialized subordinations that Chicanx/Latinx experiences at the intersections of race, language, immigrant status, and surname (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005). According to Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, LatCrit “is a framework that can be used to theorize and examine the ways in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact on the educational structures, processes, and discourses that effect People of Color generally and Latinas/os specifically” (2001, p. 479). LatCrit and CRT are complementary frameworks comprised of the same tenets and developed for the same purposes; however, LatCrit specifically works to explore the role of race and racism in education, specifically those experienced by Latina/o students (Valdés, 1996; Velez, 2008).

Together, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit acknowledge storytelling, speaking ones’ truth; and making public silenced narratives as important tools to challenge and problematize “majoritarian stories” that are part of the dominant narrative (Delgado, 1989; Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Ladson Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The voices, stories, and experiential knowledge of Latinx parents are filled with resistance, courage and hope in the face of narratives constructed by the dominant society that function to silence and control, while maintaining status and power.

Both Critical Race Theory and LatCrit supplement each other in powerful ways by providing additional epistemological considerations (Fernández, 2002) that work to privilege and validate the “experiential knowledge” shared through the narratives of the Latinx parents in Somos Escritores as important ways of knowing, viewing, being, and understanding their roles as parents. Together, these frameworks provide tools to help us to imagine and (re)imagine more inclusive and socially just educational spaces that recognize and privilege the knowledge that resides within Latinx parents’ experiences and realities to transform classrooms, schools, and communities. In the next section, I provide a brief literature review of storytelling as it relates to the work of the Latinx parents and daughters in Somos Escritores.

Review of literature

To understand the stories that were shared between Latinx mothers and fathers and their adolescent daughters in Somos Escritores workshops, I draw upon sociocultural theories of literacy that views literacy as a social act, mediated by a set of practices that are dependent on the contexts in which literacy occurs (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2012; Heath, 1983; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Street, 1995). Specifically, I situate this study within the constructs of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001) to consider the importance of the teaching and learning practices that occur in Latinx households and communities and acknowledges them as rich sites of teaching, learning, and resistance. The work of Moll et al. and Dolores Delgado Bernal highlight the rich cultural practices of Latinx parents, families, and communities and the many ways that Latinx children draw upon these cultural practices in their personal, social, and academic worlds. This includes the ways in which our understandings of everyday life is mediated by our histories of knowing and being together with people who support continuity and change in our lives, in this case through community building in Somos Escritores. In the next sections, I provide a brief review of literature related to (a) storytelling, (b) storytelling in Latinx families, and (c) storytelling in family engagement spaces. Providing a situated discussion of the role that storytelling plays in the context of this study allows me to better understand and explain how storytelling as a method and practice is shaped by multiple dimensions through the work of Latinx parents and their daughters in Somos Escritores.


**Storytelling**

Stories are a way, a tool, that we use to make sense of our experiences, our lives, and our worlds (Bruner, 2004). Our stories connect us to our past and help us to understand the present while we consider how they connect to our future (Taylor, 2001). We tell stories, or rather develop and organize narratives, based upon our experiences as a way to share with others important details from our lives (Dyson & Genishi, 1994). It is through our stories and shared conversations with one another that we construct and (re)construct reality (Delgado, 1989).

Historically, women and men from marginalized groups have written, told, and shared stories of their personal experiences as a form of resistance, liberation, and survival (Delgado, 1989; Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2008). Black slaves told stories of the pain and oppression they experienced by Whites through songs, verse, and letters (Northup, 2013). Mexicans and Mexican Americans composed corridos (ballads) that tell stories of love, hope, and struggle while challenging the social political context (De Los Ríos, 2017; Paredes, 1958). Native Americans stories, oral and written, address similar themes, while describing the deep connections of every living creature and their relationship to the land that is shared and inhabited by all (Bruchac, 2003; King, 2008). Chicana and Black feminists and scholars wrote about their lived experiences in biographies and autobiographies to theorize their lived realities and bring attention to the oppressions they faced at the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation (Anzaldúa, 1999; Collins, 2009; Lorde, 2007). Collectively, these communities continue to tell stories from their personal experiences to make visible the oppressions they encountered while using storytelling as a tool to construct new realities for themselves and future generations.

**Storytelling in Latinx families**

Qualitative studies of Latinx families have uncovered the rich cultural, familial, and linguistic resources and practices present in families, homes, and communities (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Moll et al., 1992; Valdés, 1996). Specifically, this research points to the cultural practices that Latinx mothers and fathers engage in with their children to raise them to be good people and navigate their daily lives. These cultural practices include the use of consejos (“advice”) (De La Piedra, 2011; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Fránquiz & Del Carmen, 2004; Valdés, 1996), dichos (“sayings, words of wisdom”) (Delgado Gaitan, 2005; Espinoza-Herold, 2007; Fránquiz & Salazar, 2007), and cuentos (“stories”) (Delgado Gaitan, 2005; Gándara, 1995) and are rooted in the social, historical, and political histories of families. Central to these cultural practices are the lessons embedded in this wisdom and the specific purposes for which they are shared and passed along to children.

Within this literature, scholars have documented the use of storytelling practices in Latinx families and households and have found it to be an experience that Latinx children engage in with parents as part of their daily lives (Reese, 2012) and illustrate the ways that these practices cross the borders of home, school, and media (Medina, 2012). In these studies, many of the stories and anecdotes that Latinx parents recounted and shared with their children were based upon the parents’ own childhood experiences (Dworin, 2006; Reese, 2012), family stories (Dworin, 2006; Flores & Early, 2017), and stories of immigration experiences (Gallo, 2016; Villenas, 2001). These stories shared between Latinx parents and their children serve multiple purposes, not only as a means to “share life knowledge” (Riojas-Cortez, Flores, Smith, & Clark, 2003) but also as a powerful pedagogical tool to teach “resistance strategies” (Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) to navigate their lives.

For instance, Dolores Delgado Bernal (2001) conducted interviews with Chicana students who discussed their educational journeys from elementary school to college. These young women shared the ways they navigated the silencing and exclusionary practices of school by drawing upon the wisdom and lessons, their “pedagogies of the home,” taught in their homes by their parents through “legends, corridos, storytelling and behavior” (p. 597). Delgado Bernal defines pedagogies of the home as “the communication, practices and learning that occur in the home and community … and serve as a cultural knowledge base that helps Chicanas … negotiate the daily experiences of sexist,
racist, and classist microaggressions” (p. 624) and are passed along through parents and across generations as tools of resistance and survival. Similarly, Sarah Gallo (2016) documented the counterstorytelling practices (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) shared between a Latino father and his elementary-school-age daughter as they told and retold stories of their immigration experiences. Gallo described how this father drew upon humor to engage his daughter in conversations about the “realities of living undocumented” (p. 280) while preparing her with tools and strategies for navigating the uncertainties of their reality. Both Delgado Bernal and Gallo share powerful examples of the ways that Latinx parents use storytelling as a cultural resource to disrupt and “interrupt the transmission of dominant ideologies” (Elenes, González, Delgado Bernal, & Villenas, 2001) to provide their daughters with tools of resistance and survival.

Latinx family engagement and storytelling

Some researchers have found that family engagement spaces have been designed and organized to center the cultural and linguistic practices of Latinx families as entry points to working with and for families and important to building relationships based on confianza (“mutual trust”) (Alvarez, 2017; Fránquiz & Del Carmen, 2004; Valdés, 1996) and reciprocity. One example of such a program is the Pájaro Valley Experience (Ada, 1988), a program for Spanish-speaking parents and their children in which families gathered to read and discuss children’s literature while sharing stories and poems written by children. In addition to learning read-aloud strategies, the program provided a space for parents to encourage their children to write their own stories while beginning to write and share themselves (Ada, 1988). Voces del Corazón: Voices from the Heart (Pérez, 2005), was a collaboration between the local National Writing Project (NWP) site and two schools to organize and host family literacy nights for Latinx parents and students that focused on creating space for families to feel welcomed, safe, and motivated to participate in writing and sharing of their stories. Through sustained writing and sharing alongside families, teachers learned that collectively they shared many of the same concerns, hopes, and dreams (Pérez, 2005).

Similarly, Concha Delgado Gaitán (2005) and Janise Hurtig (2005) describe their unique experiences working alongside immigrant Mexican mothers in community education spaces located in Carpinteria and Chicago’s Little Village. Across their work, they document the ways in which Latina/Mexicana women gathered and created community through the sharing of oral and written narratives from their lived experiences. Within both spaces, the stories that women shared mediated the creation of a community while providing a platform to navigate and appropriate unfamiliar spaces. In the telling of their stories, the mothers “discovered that indeed their life experience exemplified knowledge, intelligence, and courage—all the elements in their stories that they related to each other and their children” (Delgado Gaitán, 2005, p. 268). Collectively, these programs brought families and mothers together in ways that were culturally relevant (Ladson Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) by centering writing and storytelling as an important cultural and familial resource from which to draw upon, learn from, and extend to inform activities and invitations.

This study of Somos Escritores, and specifically of Latinx mothers and fathers writing and sharing their stories alongside their adolescent daughters, fills a gap in educational scholarship that explores Latinx family engagement in family literacy spaces. Several studies on family engagement and family literacy focus on parents’ interactions with their young children (Pre-K–3) engaging in early literacy practices, specifically focused on reading and decoding strategies. Somos Escritores works to fill this gap in educational research on family engagement and family literacy by connecting Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters in the intergenerational exchange of knowledges and ways of knowing through the drawing, writing, and sharing of stories. In the next section, I provide an overview of Somos Escritores workshops.
**Somos Escritores/We Are Writers writing workshops**

*Somos Escritores/We Are Writers* is a creative writing workshop for Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters (Grades 7–12) hosted on the local university campus. At *Somos Escritores*, Latinx parents and their daughters are invited to draw, write, perform, and share stories from their lived experiences. Workshops are designed with and for Latinx parents and their daughters to open space for the intergenerational exchange of stories and experiences. Workshops took place during the summer months of June and July 2016. The program consisted of six workshops, each an hour and a half long, including the final celebration of writing. Parents and their daughters were provided with all writing materials, including pens, pencils, crayons, markers, paper, and a writer’s notebook. In addition, at all workshops, we served a light dinner and snacks.

Weekly workshops focused on different topics that built on each other and overlapped in powerful ways. Workshop topics included: Where I’m From, Scar Stories, The Masks We Wear, What It’s Like to Be a Teenager, and Why I Write. In addition, we created guiding questions to further anchor our thinking, conversations, and writing and introduced mentor texts (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007) to inspire writing (See Table 1).

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<tr>
<th>Table 1. <em>Somos Escritores/We are Writers</em> workshop overview.</th>
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<td><strong>Workshop Topic</strong></td>
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<td>Workshop #1:</td>
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<td>Workshop #5:</td>
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<td>Why I Write</td>
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All workshops were organized to invite and encourage parents and their daughters to explore their worlds through topics that related to their lives. We intentionally designed activities and practices that used drawing, writing, and oral storytelling as tools to mediate the sharing of personal stories. These practices included reading and discussion of mentor texts (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007), drawing and freewriting, personal writing time, author share, and closing reflection. From my experiences as a classroom teacher and work with youth and families in after-school and summer writing workshops, I had learned that these practices offer multiple entry points (Flores, 2018) into the reading, writing, and sharing of our lived experiences in different modalities.

We opened all workshops with a reading and discussion of a mentor text (Dorfman & Cappelli, 2007; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) that linked to the topic for the day. The mentor texts we introduced were models for sharing our stories in a variety of modes and were intentionally selected based upon their focus on issues related to identity, culture, language, family, and community. We included a variety of English, Spanish, and bilingual (English/Spanish) mentor texts in all workshops, including both print-based and digital poetry, picture books, short stories, and autobiographies.

Next, we led parents and their daughters through a short drawing and freewriting time. During this time, we invited families to draw and write based on our reading and discussion of the mentor text. We modeled our own drawing and writing, then families had time to draw, free write, and share in pairs and/or in the whole group.

After sharing of drawings and freewriting, we discussed lingering questions and ideas. Then we moved into writing time, and families were invited to expand their drawing and freewriting or draft a new piece based on our collective discussion and their own lived experiences. Many of the parents and daughters chose to expand upon their drawing and freewriting while using mentor texts as inspiration for structure and form.

Finally, we closed workshops with author share time. Author share time provided space for parents and their daughters to read their writing aloud to the entire group. All parents and daughters were invited and encouraged to share a line, paragraph, stanza, or their entire piece with the group. This was a time to celebrate the voices, stories, and experiences of each mother, father, and daughter. Immediately following share time, we reflected on our time together in the workshop, and parents and their daughters discussed their new understandings.

On the night of our final workshop, we publicly shared our collective stories and experiences at a potluck-style celebration of writing. In front of an audience of our family and close friends, each mother, father, and daughter read a piece of writing they had crafted at the workshop or on their own time. At the celebration, each family brought food and desserts to share with one another.

Somos Escritores writers

To recruit Latinx parents and their daughters to participate in workshops, I contacted the director of a university-sponsored outreach program for Latina middle and high school girls aimed at increasing the enrollment of first-generation Latinas by directly involving families in the education of their children. She invited me to present a short writing workshop at their monthly session for eighth-grade girls and their parents. My presentation provided a glimpse into Somos Escritores, as I invited girls and parents to participate in a drawing, writing, and sharing activity similar to what was planned for the summer.

After the presentation, I handed out information about the summer workshops. Initially 22 families (44 girls, mothers, and fathers) signed up to participate. After following up with all parents and girls via e-mail, personal phone calls, and letters, five families enrolled in the program and the study. Of the initial five families that enrolled, four families participated in all workshops and the study. Two families were father and daughter writing pairs and two families were mother and daughter writing pairs. In the next section, I introduce each father and daughter and mother and daughter writing pair.
**Rocky and Valente**

Rocky is a 14-year-old girl who was born and raised in Arizona by her Honduran-born parents, Valente and Julia. She spends her free time drawing, writing, reading, playing with her dogs, and spending time with her friends—when her parents permit it. Rocky is part of an online community, an “affinity group” (Gee, 2004), in which she coauthors stories with friends around a shared interest and shares them in the group for constructive feedback. In the fall, she will be entering ninth grade at a high school with a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) focus.

Valente was born and raised in Honduras. He arrived in the United States as a 15-year-old. Valente is the head of maintenance for an apartment complex. He is involved in a local grassroots organization focused on educating and empowering immigrant families and communities to defend their human rights. When Valente is not working, he enjoys spending time with his family and outdoors fixing his yard. He has very high hopes that his daughter will fulfill her dreams and works tirelessly to ensure that she is able to take advantage of every opportunity that is placed before her.

**Reyna and Samuel**

Reyna is a second-generation self-identified Mexican and the oldest of three children. Reyna plays the guitar and has formed a band with her friends. Her dream is to become a musician and make a difference in the world through her music. In the fall, Reyna will enter ninth grade at a high school connected with the local university.

Samuel was born and raised in Arizona. He met his wife, Lucy, in high school, and they have been married for 15 years. Samuel is a contractor for a pest control company with the local high school district. He enjoys spending time with his family. It is important to him that his kids have a good relationship with their relatives and understand the importance of family. He hopes that Reyna will pursue her passions, but he also encourages her to be realistic in her goals and not “put all of her eggs in one basket.”

**Blanca and Alma**

Blanca is a first-generation Latina living with her mother, Alma. She is 14 years old and the youngest of two children. Blanca enjoys listening to music, working out, and Face Timing her friends. She is interested in fashion and likes to shop. Blanca hopes to attend an out of state college and pursue a degree in a field where she can make a difference in the world. In the fall, she will be entering ninth grade at the same high school as Reyna.

Alma was born and raised in México. She is a “dreamer” with many aspirations for herself and her daughters. She believes in treating all living creatures with dignity and respect and shares these beliefs with her daughter. Alma takes classes at the Institute of Healing Arts, where she is studying to be a life coach. She wants to help people heal by finding peace and strength in themselves, much like she has found in herself. Alma hopes that her daughters will live a peaceful and happy life.

**Elizabeth and Rose**

Elizabeth is a 15-year-old self-identified Mexican American. She is Rose’s youngest child. Elizabeth enjoys writing, especially stories about her life and about issues that concern her, like racism and the current president. Outside of school, she is involved in a nondomination Christian youth group. In the fall, Elizabeth will enter 10th grade at her neighborhood high school.

Rose was born in El Paso, Texas, and has two children, Guillermo and Elizabeth. Rose works from home as a loan officer for a car dealership. She enjoys dancing, shopping, and spending time with her family. Family is important to her, and she is very close to her three younger sisters. Rose hopes
that Elizabeth graduates from college and enters a profession that she loves and in which she can make a difference in the world.

**Data collection and analysis**

This study is grounded in the intergenerational stories and experiences shared between and among Latinx parents and their adolescent daughters. In my inquiry, I employed a qualitative case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Yin, 2013) approach to data collection and analysis that draws on the work of scholars (Dyson, 1997; Finders, 1997; Winn, 2011) who have used this approach to understand and uncover the complexities of teaching and learning as students, teachers, and families participate in experiences across sites of learning, which include homes and communities. Data collection and analysis was an ongoing process that took place throughout all phases of the study. For this study, which is part of my larger dissertation research, I collected and analyzed three data sources. These data sources include writing samples, ethnographic field notes, (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) and semistructured interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) transcripts.

At workshops, as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980), I wrote ethnographic field notes (Emerson et al., 2011) focused on the discussions, stories, and experiential knowledge shared between and among parents and their adolescent daughters. Field notes helped to capture my initial observations and impressions of interactions and discussions. Writing samples were collected from parents and daughters and included free writing, final drafts, and end-of-workshop reflections. The writing crafted by parents and their daughters provided me with insight into the types of stories being shared as well as the lessons and experiential knowledge embedded in each piece.

Throughout the program, I conducted individual semistructured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) with all parents and daughters to follow up with observations and field notes. At interviews, which lasted from 45 minutes to one and a half hours, I asked parents to share memorable stories about their daughters, how they view their role as a parent, and their hopes for their daughters’ futures. I asked girls to talk about their relationship with their parent, what they want their parent to know about them, and memorable stories about their parent. Interviews provided the time and space for us to engage in deep one-on-one conversations that allowed parents and daughters to further reflect on and share through oral stories their personal experiences in school, home, family, and the community.

Throughout data collection, all sources were analyzed using grounded theory coding techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and narrative inquiry methods (Riessman, 2008). Coding took place in stages throughout collection and analysis. I coded for places in which parents shared their experiential knowledge in discussions, written stories, and reflections and looked for the learnings embedded in their stories. As I coded, I created categories, collapsing and expanding throughout analysis. Initial categories included special family members, family traditions, and growing up. Looking across the data, I continued to analyze, confirm, and revise existing codes and categories to ensure alignment with the theoretical and epistemological lens that I brought to the study. From my analysis of the data, I found that embedded in the stories shared at workshops, recounted in interviews, and recalled during discussion, parent’s stories and consejos were based upon their experiential knowledge, in which they shared stories that had been silenced, hidden, lost, or forgotten over time and space.

**Findings**

Three categories emerged: stories of resistance, stories of family, and stories for the future. In the next sections, I provide portraits from the stories, words, and voices of Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose to illustrate the findings of each of these categories and how they illuminate the ways that parents are raising their daughters to be chicas fuertes (“strong girls”).
Stories of resistance: “I write to let my daughter know that I am here.”

Throughout Somos Escritores workshops, parents shared many stories with their daughters that included consejos, pieces of advice, and important lessons from their experiences as adults and children. Embedded in their stories was a wealth of knowledge and wisdom (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001) that served as a tool to support their daughters in navigating their everyday lives. One type of story that parents shared at workshops and recounted during individual interviews were stories of struggles and challenges they endured throughout their lives, which I intentionally coded and categorized as “stories of resistance.” I made this intentional decision to categorize their stories as resistance rather than struggle to foreground the strength and dignity of each parent in the face of challenging and life-changing events (Villenas, 2005). Although many of their stories contained instances of struggles and challenges, it is the resistance at the intersection of gender, immigrant status, language, and race that each parent challenged in their telling and (re)telling of these experiences.

For example, at our second workshop, parents and their daughters wrote “Scar Stories.” This topic stemmed from a workshop created by G. Lynn Nelson (2004) in which writers have the opportunity to reflect on their lives and uncover the stories that reside in their physical and emotional scars. According to Nelson, “[g]iven the tools, we can heal ourselves and break the terrible chain of passing down wounds” (p. 112). Through reflection, writers “bear witness” to the deep emotions contained within these memories and the learning attached to these experiences of strength, survival, and resistance.

To open this workshop, we read the poem “Cicatrices,” written by Piedad Bonnett (2013), and discussed the dolor (“pain”) and belleza (“beauty”) of our scars and the memorias (“memories”) that were invoked by remembering and reflecting on our scar stories. Afterward, we discussed different types of scars: physical scars, the ones we can see, and emotional scars, the ones that are hidden or that we hide from others. Next, we read, watched, and discussed multimodal examples of people sharing their scar stories through video, art, and writing. Then I shared my own scar story, a piece about my pregnancy and postpartum experience, describing the joys and challenges of motherhood, including my hopes and fears in raising my daughter to be a good person.

Finally, parents and their daughters reflected upon and wrote their own scar stories by first labeling their physical and emotional scars on an outline of a body and heart that we provided them. After labeling, they picked one scar to write about, describing in detail the experience behind the scar and their learning.

Parents and daughters wrote about the physical and emotional scars they endured from misunderstandings with friends, injuries from horseplay with siblings and friends, and losing family members. Alma, Blanca’s mother, wrote and shared the painful memory of losing her mother at a young age. At the end of her story, she shares what she learned from these experiences and how they prepared her for the future. She concluded:

Las cicatrices que llevo en mi cuerpo también impregnaron a mi alma, pero esta misma alma las transformó, como las rosas que tienen espinas. Son como memorias recordándome que no hay sol sin oscuridad.

A lo largo de mi vida, he tenido varias cicatrices. Esas que no se ven en el cuerpo, pero sí en la mirada. La primera fue cuando mi madre murió. Yo era solo una niña, pero se marchó cuando más la necesitaba, sin que yo pueda decirle que la amaba, y sin poder escuchar un “te amo” de ella.

(The scars I carry in my body also stained my soul, but it is this same soul that transformed them, just as roses that have thorns. They are like the memories reminding me that there is no sun without darkness.)

In her scar story, Alma reflects on the sadness and grief she experienced in losing her mother at a young age. At the end of her story, she shares what she learned from these experiences and how they prepared her for the future. She concluded:
“Then I realized that was the beginning and prepared me for what was to come; they just made me stronger ... and more valiant.”

Alma’s scar story is not only a story in which she recounts a painful time in her life but also a story of growth, learning, and healing (Anzaldúa, 1999). In her words, she resists the temptation to let this pain and grief hold her back from what lies ahead in her future and her daughter’s future. Through sharing this experience with her daughter, she teaches and models for her daughter how challenges and struggles prepare us to be más fuerte (“stronger”) and más valiente (“more valiant”) in life.

Similarly, at our closing celebration of writing, Valente, Rocky’s dad, shared a piece he drafted outside the workshop, entitled “El Imigrante.” In his final piece, Valente narrates his personal experience immigrating from Honduras to the United States. He described the many dangers he witnessed and encountered as he crossed three borders. At the celebration, he stood behind the podium and read his powerful piece to an audience of Somos Escritores mothers, fathers, daughters, and invited guests. He read:

Hola soy Valente,
Un emigrante Hondureno:
En una pequeña mochila.
Me despedí de mis seres queridos y parti de mi tierra Honduras.
Con la intencion de llegar a los Estados Unidos de Norte America.
Sabía que necesitaria mas que valor, sabía que en ves de encontrar
El sueno Americano podría encontrar la muerte, son tres fronteras las que cruse,
Por tres países anduve indocumentado, tres veces tube yo la vida que arriesgar,
Por eso dices que soy tres veces mojado, en Guatemala y México me icierno prisoner
Por no portar identificacion.
En Centro America dada la situacion economica, social, y politica, para muchos no tenemos
Otra solucion abandonar nuestra patria y tal vez para siempre, cinco millas recorri,
Puedo decir que las recuerdo una a una, viajando en auto bus, en ferrocarrial, y caminando dia
Y noche en medio de montanas, laderas, y desierto, enfrentando muchos peligros y desafios,
Algunos no logran alcanzar el llamado sueno Americano. Por que se quedan en el camino,
Ya sea mutilados por la bestia [ferrocarril] o mueren de ipotermia o por insolacion devido
A las temperaturas implacables del decierto. Y todo esto por buscar
Mejores condiciones de vida aqui en el pais de las oportunidades.
Aun no soy de aqui por que mi nombre no aparese en ningun archivo.
Atte: el imigrante
(“Hello, I am Valente, an immigrant from Honduras.
In a small backpack I carried a couple of shirts, some pictures, and a thousand memories.
I said goodbye to my beloved ones, and I left back my homeland in Honduras with the intention to reach
the United States of North America.
I knew I would need more than just courage, I knew that instead of finding the American Dream I could
find death. Three borders I had to cross over, three countries I had to go through as undocumented. Three
times I had to risk my life.
That’s why people say I am “three times mojado.” In Guatemala and Mexico they arrested me because I
didn’t have an identification.
Because of the economic, social, and political situation in Central America, many of us we have no choice
than abandoning our nations, perhaps to never see them again. Five miles (sic) I traveled. I can say I
remember each one of them, traveling on a bus, train, or walking day and night across the mountains,
slopes, or deserts, facing many dangers and challenges.
Some of us cannot reach the American Dream. Many stay behind along the road, whether mutilated by “La
Bestia” [a train called The Beast], hypothermia, or insolation because of the desert’s relentless temperature.
All of this looking to get a better life here, in the “Country of Opportunities.”
I am not from here yet because my name is not recorded in any file.
Sincerely: The immigrant.”)

In Valente’s piece, he described the hopes and dreams that he brought with him on his journey
for “a better life” and the opportunities not available in his homeland. He shared his firsthand
experiences of the risks and dangers that he encountered as he immigrated to the United States. In addition, he speaks of the tensions and contradictions that he navigated and still navigates at the intersections of race, language, and immigrant status.

Following this reading, at an interview, Valente talked about “El Inmigrante.” He explained why he wrote the piece and its significance. He said:

Valente: … Esa fue una … Pues es una historia real de que yo la viví, y así como yo la viví, la han vivido miles y miles de personas que migran de los países hasta acá, Norteamérica. (‘… that was a … a real story lived by myself, that’s the way I lived it, and also it is like thousands and thousands of migrant people here in North America.’)

Tracey: Sí. (“Yes.”)

Valente: Y unos, pues con suerte de poder llegar con bien y otros que pues, lastimosamente, no alcanzan a llegar a … por muchos motivos. (“And some of them are lucky to get here and others sadly cannot get here … because of many reasons.”)

Valente explained that he wrote una historia real (“a true story”) about his journey to the United States from his homeland of Honduras that he lived and that many have lived and continue to live, with some arriving safely and others not. Valente’s story is one example of the ways that Somos Escritores opened up space for the sharing of a story of resistance in which Valente illustrates the challenges of immigrating to a new country while continuing to resist and let his daughter know he exists for her and their family. Through their stories, parents are enacting control of the conditions of their lived realities while modeling courage and resistance for their daughters.

**Stories of family: “Family is the most important thing.”**

Another type of story that parents shared with their daughters were stories of family. In these stories, Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose reflected on their lived experiences from their childhood and teen years to write and share memories about their own parents, lessons learned from their families, and cuentos (“stories”) shared with them by their own abuelitos, tíos, and tías. The stories that parents shared with their daughters illustrate the cultural and familial resources of their homes and communities, their “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) and “pedagogies of the home” (Delgado Bernal, 2001) that are embedded in the narratives they shared with their daughters.

At our first Somos Escritores workshop, I asked parents and their daughters to reflect and draw a picture in response to the question: “Where are you from? ¿De dónde eres?” After sharing our drawings, we read the poems, “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon (1999) and “De Donde Soy Yo” by Levi Romero (2009). Then, parents and daughters returned to their drawings and expanded their response by crafting a poem of all the people, places, and moments that are part of where they are from. In Rose’s writing, she draws upon her “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) to describe where she is from:

I am from El Paso, Texas
And raised in Phoenix, Arizona
And my family comes from Chihuahua
I am from Zacatecas
From making fresh flour tortillas and Abuelito’s hot chocolate
From coffee, tamales, and novelas.

Rose reflects upon her life to share with her daughter the important memories that she carries with each day.

At the fourth workshop, parents and their daughters reflected on their experiences as teenagers, then and now. Both parents and their daughters reflected on how they saw their parents when they
were children and how they see them now. Samuel, Reyna’s father, reflected on his relationship with his parents and in his writing described the sacrifices they made for him and his brothers and sisters to ensure they were “taken care of” and happy. He wrote:

I saw my parents as these hardworking people making sure us kids were taken care of. I understand now that they lived to take care of us and provide for us. Giving us a better life than they had. Always working and taking care of us. Not taking time for themselves.

He wrote and shared this with his daughter and the group, explaining how at times he did not understand why his parents worked so much; however, now as a father, he understands the sacrifices they made to ensure they had the financial means to support him and his siblings. He finished his piece honoring them and all they taught him about how “to be a dad and a mentor.” He concluded: “I want my parents to know that I love them and without them I would be lost. They taught me to be a dad and a mentor. I forever will be grateful to them.”

In sharing this family story with his daughter and the group, Samuel not only honored his parents but also opened dialogue with his daughter to help her to understand how he was raising her and the sacrifices he is making so that she may have more opportunities in her life than he was afforded.

These family stories that parents shared with their daughters illustrate the cultural strength (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Valdés, 1996), love, and support of the generations that came before them. Most importantly, these stories highlight the deep love of family and provide their daughters with the lesson that “family is the most important thing.”

**Stories for the future: “I want her to be happy.”**

At workshops, Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose, shared with their daughters and with each other stories that illustrated their love for their daughters and the deep desire for them to be happy in their current and future lives. For example, during the fifth workshop, parents and their daughters reflected and wrote a personal letter to one another in which they shared what it is/was like being a teenager, who they are, who they are becoming, and important advice they wish to share with each other.

During share time, Samuel shared his letter with his daughter and then read it to the entire group. He read:

Dear Daughter,

I enjoyed going to school to hang around with my friends … then going outside to play until dusk. Being around my family and friends made me happy…. What gave me hope was that I was young and had a whole life to live. I worried about school and doing good and also not having what I wanted like the new Super Nintendo…. I envision being a lawyer and helping my mom financially. I want to let my daughter know I am here for her 100%. She [will] never disappoint me.

In his letter to his daughter, Samuel described the people and activities that brought him joy as a teenager. He also explained his concerns with school and “doing good.” This letter opened up space for Samuel to reflect on his lived experiences as teenager and share with his daughter, Reyna, about who he was as a teen and express to her that he will always support her in all of her endeavors.

During semistructured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose, we continued these conversations that we started in workshops through both writing and discussions. Each parent reflected on and shared how they viewed their role as a parent and how they viewed their daughters. In an interview with Alma, we sat and talked about being mothers. During our conversation, in describing her view of her role as a mother, she shared the ways that the gendered norms and cultural expectations of her home country complicated her relationship with Blanca’s dad. Alma explained that after several years of enduring an unhealthy relationship, she found the strength and courage not only in herself but in her daughters to leave to make a better life. She shared:

Porque todo lo pasado, esas cosas que … que … Digamos que no fue sufrimiento; fue pruebas que te ponen. (“Because of many things in the past … those things that … let’s say it wasn’t suffering; they were tests that life put on you.”)
Alma explained that from these experiences she learned that this “wasn’t suffering” but “tests,” and from these tests she learned and grew. She wanted to be happy and model for her own daughters what a healthy relationship is and that the most important thing in life is to be happy. She continued:

> Yo estoy muy contenta porque veo a ... Lo que mi inspira son mis hijas a salir adelante; las dos. ("I am very happy because I see ... what inspires me to keep going are my daughters, both of them.")

Alma described how she felt about choosing to leave her home country and her unhealthy relationship to come to the United States. She now feels like she has “wings to fly” and “feel[s] free.” It is not only these feelings of freedom and independence but the inspiration of her daughters that keep her moving forward and model both strength and happiness for them.

Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose support their daughter’s happiness by encouraging them to pursue their dreams and choose the life that they want for themselves. They shared the following:

**Valente:** … queremos que ella sea una profesional de bien y esperando la carrera que ella escoja... esperamos que llegue a la universidad y que se gradüe y que la carrera que escoja. ("... we want her to become a professional who does good by choosing the career she likes ... We hope she’d get to the university and graduate in the area she chooses.")

**Samuel:** I encourage her to explore all her options and not put all her eggs in one basket. She needs choices.

**Alma:** Y su meta siempre es ... Siempre ella tiene bien claro que ella quiere ir a la universidad. Y la apoyo. [And, her goal always ... She always has been clear that she wants to go to the university. And I support her.]

**Rose:** Stay in school. Study, study, study ... because books are food for your brain. Follow your heart and find a job that will make you happy.

In their encouragement, they also provide tough love and honesty to ensure that their daughters follow their hearts while staying focused on the future.

### Discussion

During *Somos Escritores* workshops, Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose drew, wrote, and orally shared stories rooted in their histories and lived realities at the intersections of gender, race, and immigrant status. Parents shared very personal stories of their experiences immigrating to a new country and the dangers they faced and continue to face, they shared of their decisions to leave an unhealthy relationship within strict religious and cultural scripts, and they shared stories of their own parents and the knowledge and traditions passed along to them as children and young adults. Their stories create theories (Anzaldúa, 1999) for their daughters to draw upon in their everyday experiences while keeping them connected to the cultural, familial, and linguistic practices and resources of their homes and communities. These firsthand experiences shared in their stories, along with the tools provided by CRT and LatCrit, offer a lens to begin to understand how their histories and intersecting identities inform the ways that they navigate oppressive spaces, build social networks of support, and encouragement with one another and raise their daughters to resist, rather than conform.

The experiences, voices, and stories of Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose create a counterstory that challenges and interrupts the historical and current dominant ideology in which Latinx are viewed and seen as “criminals” and “uncaring.” CRT and LatCrit provide tools to move beyond a disruption of this dominant ideology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) to dismantling this “fake news” and hateful rhetoric through the exchange of and public sharing of stories from the lived realities of these parents. Their collective storytelling from their lived experiences “open new windows into reality, showing ... possibilities for life other than the one we live” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414), creating a counternarrative of not only the Latinx community in general but about Latinx parents and families in particular. Within the current political context in which the words and actions of politicians work to increasingly place blame upon and police
their voices and bodies, these parents are not silenced, using their experiences and stories as an “essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2436) and that of their daughters and families.

The stories that Valente, Samuel, Rose, and Elizabeth drew, wrote, and orally shared are filled with family memories that parents want to protect, wisdom passed along to them by their elders, and learnings from their own lived experiences. Together, CRT and LatCrit worked to center the experiential knowledge of these parents through the sharing of their stories in their own words, allowing us to hear and see the voices and knowledges that are many times excluded, thus breaking silences. Their stories provide their daughters with important lessons rooted in their “funds of knowledge (Moll, et., al.)” and “pedagogies of the home” (Delgado Bernal, 2001). In hearing the stories that their parents shared, girls learned of their parents’ lives before they were born and began to see them in new ways. Rocky shared that hearing her dad’s stories and listening to him respond to her ideas made her realize that she “should open up more … and tell him how I feel.” Like Rocky, Reyna explained that her dad always shares stories at home and that it was “interesting to hear some new stories … and imagine him as a kid.” The value of sharing these stories, of these teachings, these lessons, these ways of knowing is evident in the ways that these parents name and define their hopes and dreams for their daughters.

In bearing witness to the stories shared by Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose, parents are raising their daughters to be chicas fuertes (“strong girls”), providing them with a foundation built on strength, love, and hope to pursue their passions and accomplish their life goals. Parents support their daughters in navigating borders, real and imagined, and institutions in order to ensure that they can benefit from the many opportunities that are offered to them. They work tirelessly, both at work and at home, to meet their daughters’ personal, social, and academic needs, which in turn both motivates and challenges their daughters to step into their power. Together, parents and their daughters are coconstructing a new narrative, a counternarrative, in which they (de)construct their lived realities to (re)construct their futures.

**Implications**

As a second-generation Chicana, educator, teacher educator, and mother, growing up surrounded by the consejos and stories of my elders, I felt honored and privileged to sit around the table with Valente, Samuel, Alma, and Rose, and their daughters Rocky, Reyna, Blanca, and Elizabeth, as we smiled, laughed, cried, and shared our own stories with one another. The collective sharing of intergenerational stories mediated the creation of a community of writers that supported one another in not only the sharing but in the understanding, revising, and (re)writing of sometimes painful memories. Like Concha Delgado Gaitan (2005) and Janise Hurtig (2005), who documented the ways that sharing stories worked to support mothers in relating their lived realities to one another and finding renewed strength and knowledge within their own experiences, Somos Escritores parents discovered examples of courage, love, and hope within their narratives, which they shared with their daughters and one another. In Somos Escritores, through the oral sharing and writing of stories, Latinx parents and their daughters realized they were not alone in their experiences and found solidarity with one another in bearing witness to one another’s challenges and successes.

From a classroom perspective, counterspaces like Somos Escritores can serve as a humanizing (Gallo, 2017) approach to family and community engagement with and for Latinx families. Their counterstories are important pedagogical tools (Villenas, 2006) that educators, preservice teachers, teacher educators, and scholars can learn from to cultivate relationships with families built on confianza (Alvarez, 2017; Valdés, 1996) and respect. In work alongside families, both as a classroom teacher (Flores & Early, 2017) and new university faculty, I have learned that the first step to creating a counterspace like Somos Escritores is an invitation to parents that welcomes their languages, traditions, histories, and stories into our classrooms and schools. The oral storytelling and writing practices of Somos Escritores are examples of the ways to center the experiential knowledge and the cultural and linguistic resources (Yosso, 2005) of families through the collective sharing of stories and histories. In addition, the use of bilingual mentor texts will inspire writing and build confidence,
while the modeling and sharing of your own stories, alongside families, will blur the boundaries between home and school in powerful ways.

From my understandings and learnings from the stories and experiences of these parents and their daughters, I argue for the importance of placing the stories and consejos of Latinx families at the center of family engagement spaces to (re)imagine our work with and for families. By deeply listening and hearing the stories of Latinx parents, we can learn about the successes and challenges they have endured throughout their life, not only in their personal lives but also in navigating the educational world alongside their daughters. CRT and LatCrit provide theoretical and methodological tools that center race and racism that exists in their lives as shared through their stories and bring to the forefront the realities of their lived conditions, while illuminating the ways that they navigate oppressive systems. This learning, from their firsthand experiences, can inform our understandings about the complexities of their lives, while teaching us new ways to work and walk alongside them to disrupt traditional notions of family engagement that replicate oppressive systems that function to exclude and privilege only one way of knowing and being.

**Un consejo for educators and researchers**

Our schools need to be safe and humanizing spaces for the students, families, and communities that we serve. Under the current presidential administration, in which anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant policies are being mandated into law, and families are being detained and separated, there is a heightened sense of urgency for counterspaces like Somos Escritores, in which educators and families can come together to learn alongside one another, share resources, advocate, and mobilize to support our daughters, children, and one another (Flores, in press). Spaces like Somos Escritores challenge the deficit and dehumanizing discourse of our Latinx families and communities as they illuminated the resilience, hope, and strength rooted in their histories, stories, and traditions. To truly build together, we need to not only open spaces but hold space for our Latinx families and communities in which we enter as learners to understand the material conditions of their lived realities, moving from bearing witness to action for change.

**Note**

Throughout this piece, I highlight the stories, voices, and histories of the Latinx parents and daughters that I worked alongside in Somos Escritores. To honor their authentic voices, I made the methodological decision to preserve and honor their written and spoken words as shared at workshops and in interviews. In addition, language variations, grammatical structures, and spelling used by Latinx parents and their daughters are shared in the original oral and written form.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

**References**


