Family–School Relations and Trust in an Intercultural Context: Schools in Barcelona

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Abstract

This article attempts to broaden our understanding of the ways in which schools foster the trust of families from an immigrant background. In schools with diverse student bodies, different ideas about the behavior, responsibilities, and roles of students' families and expectations of the involvement between schools and families, especially ones of immigrant origin, can foster mistrust. Moreover, research in Spain has indicated the problematic nature of the relationships that can develop between immigrant families and the schools their children attend, as well as lack of social cohesion between immigrant and native-born families within high diversity schools. In this article, I explore the main discourses, practices, and initiatives of schools and education professionals in Spain in terms of family–school relations and trust. Based on fieldwork carried out in five public primary schools in the city of Barcelona and in-depth interviews with education professionals and Family Association representatives, I explore two elements. First, I describe participants' perceptions of immigrant family–school relations, and second, I show the practices through which education professionals attempt to create a trustful school climate and positive relations with immigrant families, as well as the obstacles they encounter in this process. Additionally, I explore various practices that have unintended consequences resulting in misunderstandings between immigrant families and schools, thus creating impediments for forming trustful relations.

Key Words: school trust, school community, family involvement, family–school relations, education professionals, Barcelona, Spain, Catalonia

Introduction

Trust is becoming an increasingly key concept in recent discussions in the educational research literature and is seen as an important predictor of good family–school relations (Herrera et al., 2020). In a trusting environment, there is more cooperation between parents and schools, which is beneficial for students and leads to schools improving. However, in schools with significant levels of immigration, trust might be harder to build and sustain because of the diverging norms and expectations of behavior among different cultures, nationalities, and religions (Carey, 2017; Demireva et al., 2014; Laurence & Bentley, 2015). Different ideas about the roles of families and varying expectations of the involvement between schools and families, especially immigrant ones, can cause mistrust (Ferguson, 2008). In schools where there are families from different backgrounds, including generationally local families and ones from various immigrant groups, each tends to see family–school relations from a different perspective.

Moreover, research in Spain has reported the problematic relationships that can develop between immigrant families and educators, as well as a lack of cohesion and trustful relations among immigrant and local families (Carrasco et al. 2009; Garreta-Bochaca, 2008, 2009; Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2018; Paniagua, 2017; Terrén & Carrasco, 2007). In order to remedy this, researchers have underlined the benefits of building strong, trustful relationships with families (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2017). This can be achieved through regular communication, transparency, and collaboration on student goals and progress (Archambault et al., 2018; Danielsen & Bendixsen, 2019). By developing a trustful school environment, schools can integrate immigrant children better and foster positive relationships with parents, something which is especially important in the case of immigrant families who can be in a position of disadvantage in their relationships with the school (Banks & Banks, 2009). Yet, there is still research to be carried out on the best practices and policies to encourage trust and parent involvement (Strier & Katz, 2015). Schools increasing trust in a setting where there is a large degree of diversity is a key challenge (Hussar & Bailey, 2014), especially since the number of immigrant children in schools is steadily increasing in Spain (Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021). Furthermore, in Spain, as in the rest of Europe and in the U.S., immigration has also been met with fear and hostility from many in society. This is something which has been used by political parties to issue antiimmigrant propaganda, especially towards racialized minorities (Hadj Abdou, 2020; Magazzini, 2021). The resulting political and social backlash against

immigrants can complicate immigrant children's educations (Jacobsen & Piekut, 2022) and hamper building trust with these communities.

Consequently, this article attempts to broaden our understanding of the ways in which educational professionals regard family trust in a context with increasing numbers of immigrant families from different backgrounds and examines the practices that schools are implementing to foster families' trust in this intercultural context. To achieve this, I explore the institutional view of immigrant families' involvement and trust in public primary schools. Accordingly, based on extensive fieldwork in five schools and in-depth interviews with education professionals and Family Association coordinators, I describe, first, their views on immigrant family–school relations and the conflicts they perceive in them. I then show the practices that education professionals are implementing in order to create a trustful school climate and higher immigrant family engagement, as well as the obstacles they encounter in this process.

Theoretical Framework

School Trust

Sociologists conceive trust as relational: something that is achieved through social experiences that develop through socialization and interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions (Carey, 2017; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993). In schools, trust is characterized by a strong school community based on cooperation and cohesion, in which adults have a common vision, shared responsibilities, and form a network of supportive relations (Holland, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). School communities are made up of various groups such as administrators, teachers, parents, and students that are highly interdependent. Trust in schools is marked by the everyday social exchanges and interpersonal relationships that are built at the individual level between members of these school groups (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The main indicators of school trust are openness, competence, benevolence, reliability, honesty, and respect (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011). Openness is the extent to which information is shared and actions and plans are transparent; benevolence is the belief that the person that is trusted will protect the trustee and act with their interests at heart; competence is having sufficient skills and expertise; reliability refers to the extent that one person can rely upon another and be confident that their own needs will be met; honesty is the integrity of the person trusted; respect is recognizing the other person's value and expertise and taking their

views into consideration. Therefore, trust in schools will depend on the extent to which the different school groups abide by these characteristics; if one of them is not fulfilled, there can be repercussions on the relationship of trust (Schneider et al., 2014).

Another important aspect of trust that affects the type of relations that are created between different school groups is the internal context of the school, that is, its culture and climate. The school culture is represented through the shared goals, norms, values, and expectations of behavior that predominate in the school (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2006). The climate of the school is based on the collective perception of its members of the enduring quality of the school in terms of its atmosphere, quality of relationships, and the image it projects to the outside (Maxwell et al., 2017). The climate is the essence of the school, and it promotes the members such as teachers, parents, and students to feel that they belong and are part of the school (Angus et al., 2009). Trust in a school is formed through having a favorable and dynamic school climate and culture.

In addition, the different school groups share the responsibility for forming a culture of trust in schools by complying with their expected roles and behaviors (Hertel, 2016; Van Maele et al., 2014). If teachers, administrators, and parents behave according to their mutual expectations and roles, their actions foster reciprocity and trust. When one school group neglects their responsibilities and ceases to fulfill them, trust is diminished.

The school administration's role is to manage the school's regulations and policies. The teachers' role is to collaborate with parents, discuss students' progress, and incentivize students' learning (Hatch, 2006). The role of parents and their responsibilities regarding the school involve communicating with teachers, providing a healthy home atmosphere for studying, supporting the child's academic achievement and behavior, and reinforcing the school's values at home (Hatch, 2006). When parents and the school staff understand each other and there are regular and quality interactions in place about children's learning habits, academic progress, attitudes to learning, and contact with other children, there is an environment of trust that students also benefit from (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Redding et al., 2004).

The School's Role in Building Trust Through Fostering Family–School Relations and Parental Involvement

One important responsibility that schools have towards parents is to enhance family–school relations, while a key responsibility of parents regarding schools is to become involved in school activities as well as

supporting their children's learning at home (Jeynes, 2012). A solid school community, effective parental involvement, and being part of voluntary associations reinforces social cohesion and creates the conditions necessary to foster trustful family–school relations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Houri et al., 2019; Karakus & Savas, 2012). Trust is essential for parents' involvement in schools, while mistrust can be an impediment to effective family–school relations, especially in poor inner-city schools with diverse student bodies (Lawson, 2003; Strier & Katz, 2015).

In order to strengthen family–school trust, schools need to ensure effective communication and interaction with parents, as this is important for aligning the educational practices of parents and teachers and obtaining higher parental involvement (Driessen et al, 2004; Shiffman, 2019). Furthermore, family–school relationships depend on what the schools have to offer to the families, and if this is matched with opportunities for participation as well as reflecting the interests of the families (Bertran, 2005; Quiñones et al., 2019). A school climate in which the parents' participation and communication with the school is minimal can lead to parents and teachers acting separately in a noncohesive manner (Conus & Fahrni, 2017).

Therefore, parental values and involvement should be acknowledged and reinforced by the school. There are six main types of parental involvement as laid down by Epstein (1995, 2001): helping parents provide a positive home environment; communicating about the child's academic progress; volunteering in school activities; supporting learning at home; involving parents in decision-making processes, for example through school boards and councils; and collaborating with the wider community and services. Parents' involvement at home, such as maintaining high expectations as well as supporting learning at home, have a significant effect on student success (Jeynes, 2012).

Family–School Relations and Trust in an Intercultural Context

In an intercultural school context, where native families and old and new immigrants come together, relationships are based on sharing values, beliefs, norms, and practices between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Zapata-Barrero, 2019). Schools, however, are not always culturally sensitive to immigrant families' needs when trying to involve them and to build trust with them. Schools might not take into account the demands of immigrant families and their particular childrearing practices in activities that aim to involve parents (Dotger & Bennett, 2010; Trumbull et al., 2001), resulting in treating families differently depending on their race, minority status, social class, and language background (Lewis & Diamond,

2015; Lunn & Kornrich, 2018; Turney & Kao, 2009). Many schools do not know how to engage parents from low-income and immigrant backgrounds. A lack of communication and misconceptions about each other and about the role that the school and the families have are key issues in family–school relations (Conus & Fahrni, 2017; Ferguson, 2008; Garreta-Bochaca, 2008).

Misunderstandings may also exist at the school about if and how immigrant families are involved in their children's schooling, as well as mistaken beliefs about their cultural and religious practices. Diverging values regarding education and varying ideas about how children should be raised might exist between immigrant families and the school (Carrasco et al., 2009; Dessel, 2010). Issues concerning diversity, such as religious instruction and celebration of religious holidays, mother tongue instruction, or other cultural demands can sometimes become sources of conflict in schools (Zilliacus, 2009). All of this can result in lower school trust (Carrasco et al., 2009; Hoy, 2011). Thus, family trust in an intercultural context will depend on a school's ability to manage and resolve disagreements and tensions.

Schools undoubtedly need to take the family's socioeconomic and cultural background into consideration in order to form trustful family–school relations (Hertel, 2016; Sacher, 2016). Furthermore, immigrant parents are often underrepresented in Family Associations and other school decision-making bodies because of their limited knowledge of the language, lack of resources, and different needs and preoccupations, not because they lack interest in the education of their children (Antunez, 2000; Danielsen & Bendixsen, 2019; Trumbull et al., 2001; Yol, 2019). It is typically native parents that are most involved in school activities and that make their voices more heard in the decision-making bodies (Martín Criado & Gómez Bueno, 2017; Doucet, 2011; Posey-Maddox, 2014); they have an advantage because their home culture is very similar to the school's norms and values.

Education professionals, since they have more agency than parents and have been assigned a decision-making role, can try to remove the barriers in the involvement of immigrant parents and to strengthen their relationships with the school through improving their capabilities and resources (Moles, 1993). To attain high levels of family–school trust, the school staff needs to encourage communication with parents, ensuring an atmosphere of respect, cooperation, and a mutual understanding of what children need.

In Spain, although notable research has been carried out on family–school relations (Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2018; Paniagua, 2017), there are no studies that address what schools do to form a trustful relationship with immigrant families. As education professionals have a significant role in influencing family trust (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017;

Tschannen-Moran, 2014), this study is an attempt to understand how education professionals view relations with immigrant families and how schools try to build trust with them.

Context

Catalonia (where the study is based), like the rest of Spain, has experienced a rapid increase in their immigrant population over the last 20 years and also an increase in the number of family members of the settled immigrants arriving to live with them (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2018). Regarding the education of immigrant children in Catalonia, their presence in schools has increased from 3% to 18.3% in the last 20 years (Domingo & Bayona, 2016). The largest immigrant groups in schools are from Africa (40.9%), Latin America (24.4%), and Asia (14%), (Domingo & Bayona, 2016). The majority of these immigrant children are in public schools and are overrepresented in certain neighborhoods (Onsès-Segarra et al., 2023).

Regarding parental involvement, the main ways in which parents become involved in their children's schools in Catalonia is through Family Associations, school councils, parent–teacher meetings, and attending parents' days in which they can talk with the teachers. The school council is a formal body that is composed of representatives of the entire educational community, while the Family Associations are informal spaces for channeling parents' voices, promoting their participation, and strengthening the school community. Each Family Association is composed of a group of parents who pay a small yearly fee and sign up for the activities run by the Family Association, with some of them becoming coordinators and volunteering to manage the association and organize the extracurricular activities[1] and services.

The Plan for Language and Social Cohesion (*Pla per a la Llengua i Cohesió Social*) was established in 2004 as a new tool for attending to diversity and for assuring the academic success as well as the social inclusion of immigrant children while preserving Catalan as the main language of instruction in a multilingual context (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009). Within this plan, schools with very high levels of immigration, labeled "high complexity" schools, receive more resources from the Education Consortium in terms of extra teachers, lower student–teacher ratios, and an extra teaching hour; depending on their needs, they might also be assigned social workers, psychologists, and intercultural mediators. The cultural and religious demands of immigrant families, such as the celebration of religious holidays,

as well as special dietary requirements and classes on their religion, are legally provided for in the agreements between the Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant communities and the Catholic state (Zapata-Barrero & Witte, 2007). Nevertheless, in practice, there is a lack of clear implementation of these demands, and each school decides to what extent they accommodate religious rights (Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2018).

Methodology

In order to understand how educational professionals perceive family trust in an intercultural context and the practices that schools implement to strengthen trust with immigrant families, this article employs a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods allow more room for the interviewee to expand on the topic and to identify personal opinions, as well as for the interviewer to comprehend perceptions which reflect an individual's unique way of understanding and viewing phenomena (McDonald, 2011). Using a combination of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and observations, I was able to delve more deeply into what school trust represents for educational professionals, to trace the different conditions and factors that can have an influence on this trust, and to observe the different practices that are put in place to build trustful relations with immigrant families (Mishra & Mishra, 2013).

The data in this article are based on extensive fieldwork carried out in five public primary schools in Barcelona over the two school years spanning from 2016 to 2018. The city districts where the study was performed were Ciutat Vella and Sants-Montjuïc, where the predominant nationalities in the schools reflect the city average, mostly immigration from Asia and Maghreb, although in Ciutat Vella, an important percentage of the student body is made up of children from EU countries, and in Sants-Montjuïc, of children from South America.[2] Although all districts across Barcelona experience segregation in terms of the origin of the students who attend the schools, the two districts included in the fieldwork have the highest level of segregation between schools with high numbers of immigrants and those without (Síndic de Greuges de Catalunya, 2016).

The schools were chosen according to the following criteria: the presence of immigrant children, the school program, and how active the Family Association was (active or not very active), as well as the reputation of the school in its neighborhood (shown in the following table). I first connected with parents in parks and in public libraries. I contacted parents that have children in public primary schools, including families with varying

Table 1. School Organizational Field Notes

Schools	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Immi-grant (%)	61%	83%	51%	25%	6%
Nationalities	Latin America (3.77), Maghreb (13.91%), Rest of Africa (0.29%), EU (6.67%), Asia (35.36%), North America (0.58%)	Latin America (4.78), Maghreb (11.7%), Rest of Africa (0.19%), EU (11.13%), Rest of Europe (0.38%), Asia (50.94%), North America (0.19%)	Latin America (16.31%), Maghreb (6.04%), EU (11.18%), Rest of Europe (0.91%), Asia (16.92%)	Latin America (7.16%), Maghreb (5.01%), Rest of Africa (1.43%), EU (3.58%), Rest of Europe (0.24%), Asia (7.64%)	Latin America (1.68%), Maghreb (0.42%), EU (1.68%), Rest of Europe (0.84%), Asia (0.84%)
FA Coordinators	English (1), French (1), Spanish (1)	Spanish (2), Filipino (1), Pakistani (1)	Municipality employee, Spanish (2), Brazilian (1), Moroccan (1)	Spanish parents (4)	Spanish parents (4)
FA	Very active	Active	Not very active	Not very active	Moderately active
School Program: Mention of Cultural Diversity	-Diversity is beneficial	-Promote knowledge about the customs of the countries where the students come from -Understand, respect, and integrate the different cultures and ethnicities that coexist in the school	-Cultural and social diversity is one of the main values of the school.	-Teaching respect for cultural diversity. - Knowing and respecting others' origins, beliefs and customs.	N/A
School Activities to Enhance Trust	-Workshops for mothers and fathers -Children's workshop -Parent–teacher meetings	-Interview with the tutor of their children in each level -Parent–teacher meetings.	-Open days. -Families going to museums	- Initial FAs, meetings -Voluntary work -Parent–teacher meetings	-Activities for families -Open days for the families

Note. Data from the Department of Evaluation of Education and data gathered by the author during participant-observations. FA=Family Association.

socioeconomic status, and I conducted pilot interviews with them to learn their opinions about the reputations of the schools and the functioning of the Family Association. Based on these initial interviews and through snowball sampling, I identified my key informants and the schools where I could carry out my research.

The data were collected primarily by means of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, participant-observation and school document analysis. I conducted interviews with the school principals (5), teachers (6), Family Association coordinators (12), and education inspectors[3] from the Education Consortium[4] (3). These participants were chosen for the following reasons: school principals and teachers work directly with the families, the Family Association coordinators are involved in extracurricular activities with all families, and education inspectors represent the views of educational institutions and can give an insider view of the school. These informants can help us understand not only the ways in which trust can be built but also the barriers encountered and the institutional support that is offered and/or lacking (see Appendix for the prompts).

The participants were granted confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity; their participation was entirely voluntary and based on the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice. I made a verbatim account of each voice-recorded interview, and extensive notes were taken for the interviewees that did not want to be voice-recorded. Additionally, I kept notes throughout the fieldwork of the formal and informal meetings I attended, and I noted the observations I made during the interviews. Later on, all information was translated from Spanish/Catalan to English.

The semi-structured interviews were complemented with participant-observation in the parent–teacher and Family Association meetings and at the main school events in order to contextualize the individual and collective experiences of the main respondents and to develop an impression of the school climate and culture (Lawson, 2003). I carried out participant observation at these meetings in order to see to what extent immigrant and native parents participate in school activities, build cohesive relations, and feel part of the school community. In informal meetings such as those held by the Family Associations that take place after school hours, I reported the interactions between the families of different backgrounds; how inviting, respectful, and open the Family Association coordinators were to immigrant families; what language these coordinators spoke to them in (Spanish or Catalan); if there was any discriminatory behavior; and the main activities that were held for families and for enhancing family trust. I also attended formal meetings, namely the parent–teacher meetings throughout the year,

where I noted if there were translators or cultural mediators, if the teachers were open to immigrant families' concerns, if they gave them support if needed, and how they managed conflicts if they arose. Overall, I noted how school staff and Family Association coordinators handled cultural and religious demands and how they talked about diversity and cultural differences. Additionally, I looked at the school's documented information such as their programs, website content, and any written materials they produce in order to better comprehend the educational project and mission of the school and how it addresses diversity and family–school relations.

In the interviews, I asked questions that were mainly about immigrant parent involvement and family–school relations, views on diversity, and the tools and projects that are used in order to create a trustful school climate, as well as the barriers that they have encountered in their work. In order to analyze my data I used thematic analysis, following the main guidelines developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Codes were related to each other, according to causal conditions, action/interaction, and context in order to create the main themes for analysis, which were then reviewed and compared against the dataset (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). When a clear pattern and interrelationship emerged with respect to the meaning given to family–school trust by the interviewees, the results were framed theoretically (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Positionality

Since the researcher is the instrument of the data collection, I paid attention to how much my biases, preconceived ideas, and theoretical perspective influenced the data analysis. One way of dealing with this was by writing detailed notes on the fieldwork and the observations I made during the interviews, while trying to ensure that my views did not interfere. Later on, during the data analysis, I went back to the field notes and checked for possible biases. I tried to use my own biases in a productive way by questioning my own statements (Schensul et al., 1999).

During the fieldwork, I tried not to influence the families or the school staff in their behavior, routines, and interactions with other families from different ethnic backgrounds. However, in conducting in-depth interviews and making the educators and families feel more at ease with me, I did try to develop a rapport with the parents. This took a considerable amount of time and only happened after I visited the school several times, went to the Family Association and parent–teacher meetings, actively took part in the extracurricular activities and events, and spent time with them in the school yard. Therefore, my role can be described as participant-observer,

since the participants were aware of my observation role, yet I was also engaging in activities (Merriam, 1998).

My position regarding the families and their community shifted constantly between being an insider and an outsider. Firstly, not being a parent at the time automatically made me an outsider, but being a woman brought me closer to the participants since they were mostly mothers. In the case of the immigrant families, as a fellow immigrant, I connected more easily with them, and they felt comfortable sharing their complaints about the treatment they had received from the native population and what they disliked about the Spanish education system. At the same time, as I did not belong to the same immigrant community as the participants, I was an outsider.

The fact that I was not a mother also had an influence in that the families and the school staff regarded me as an outsider. This led the school staff to be more willing to share their concerns about intercultural relations at the schools, even though they did try to portray their schools in the best possible light. Oftentimes, the native families and the school staff sought advice from me about how to deal with diversity and how to encourage immigrant parents to participate in school activities. Meanwhile, the immigrant families sought guidance about how to succeed in having their religious and cultural customs represented in the school and to make their voices better heard. This gave me a certain duty to contribute to the community and not let the study become a one-way process in which the researcher merely obtains information from the participants (Milner, 2007). During the fieldwork, I did try to help the families with the concerns they had, and I also shared my findings with the school staff and key informants after the fieldwork had ended.

Principal Findings

The findings indicate that the school staff, when talking about diversity, are mostly worried about immigration from Asia and Maghreb, specifically Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Morocco. Other non-European families, such as those from Latin America, are seen as finding it easier to adapt to the norms and requirements of the local education system, since they share the same language and religion as the locals. Nevertheless, concerning their participation in the school and educational values, they are regarded by the educators in the same light as the other immigrant groups.

Considering the major issues brought up by the education professionals and Family Association coordinators about the relationships and levels of trust of these immigrant families with the school, I have classified the

data around these predominant themes: immigrant family involvement in school activities, community and social cohesion between families, the educational values and cultural and religious demands of immigrant families, and school practices that respond to diversity and enhance trust, as well as the barriers encountered by education professionals.

Immigrant Family Involvement in School Activities

As noted in other studies (Vera et al., 2012), the school principals and teachers claim that immigrant families' trust in teachers' performance and in the institution lead them to be less involved in open days or at school meetings. "In these countries [Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India], since they completely trust that the teacher is educating their children, when you tell them to come to the classroom it is harder for them to come, since the teacher is the boss" (Teacher, School A).

The lower participation rate of non-European immigrant families in the Family Association is a major concern in schools with high diversity. From the interviews and school programs it was clear that the school staff and Family Association coordinators, mostly from native or European families, embrace the values of diversity and inclusion by trying to involve these families. However, they do not know the best approach to make the Family Association more inviting for them. The Family Association coordinators constantly reiterate that they make considerable efforts to involve immigrant families, who are portrayed as inactive. This, coupled with lack of time, makes them feel overwhelmed by the tasks they have to carry out as coordinators.

Although the school and the Family Association coordinators lament the lack of presence of parents of non-European origin, not all forms of participation are welcomed, as we can see in the following extract: "They [the Moroccan families] have to propose things and take action to get what they want. Because they're always complaining, but they're not very constructive" (Family Association coordinator, School A).

The more involved European parents, despite calling out the lack of immigrant family participation, at the same time unintentionally shut out parents who are trying to approach the Family Association. The school does let immigrant families know about the existence of the Family Association and leaves notices on the school bulletin board in different languages to make information available for immigrant families. However, from my observations of Family Associations in high diversity schools, I also saw a great deal of uninviting behavior, such as not speaking in a language that everyone can understand (Spanish rather than Catalan), not explaining the

rules of participation, not inviting immigrant parents to speak up, or undermining their suggestions.

In all schools, it is the native and European parents who dictate the pace and degree of families' involvement, the nature of the extracurricular activities, and the cultural differences that are acceptable. The "correct" form of parental involvement is represented by the local and European families, while the non-European families' parenting styles are portrayed as inferior, characterized by inactivity vis à vis the school. This lack of interest in the school is seen as rooted in their culture:

> It's their culture. The locals, if they have a question, they ask. They [non-European immigrant families] are not used to that. They come to leave the child and come to pick them up. I do not know if they are not interested, not used to it, don't need to, or they don't know they can do it. In the Spanish and European community, they do ask questions. I don't know if it's trust, the culture, or knowledge. They wouldn't ask why you are doing this school trip and not another one. (Municipality employee, School C)

Overall, there is an overreliance on Spanish and European families to lead the Family Association, as the school staff's expectations of parental involvement are lower for immigrant parents. As we can see in the following extract, the principal from a high diversity school expects that a new Catalan family is likely to participate: "Since a Catalan family is going to sign up for school, they may help more [with the Family Association]" (School principal, School C).

The immigrant families' low attendance at school activities and meetings is attributed mostly to the nonparticipatory culture and the lesser role of parents in the education systems in the countries of origin:

> The idea that a Pakistani family has [about schooling] is to drop their child at school and go, and the father agrees and never protests but does nothing else. It's the culture....In Morocco, the father does not go to the school at all. It's hard to organize a Family Association; the families do not know that the Family Association exists. (Inspector, Consortium of Education)

> "They [parents from Pakistan and Bangladesh] are not used to parents participating. There are many countries where they drop their children at school, and you can do what you want with them. They [the parents] don't care, and they don't know what to do, and they leave it to you. In their countries it's like that." (Teacher, School B)

Even though the school staff does not reproach the immigrant families for their lower levels of attendance at these activities and meetings, they do regard it as a lack of interest in the work of the school. The school staff claims that the low participation is also linked to these families' traditional gender roles, where the father is the one that comes to meetings for serious issues concerning their children's education.

Regarding the mothers, the fact that they are not working and at the same time not participating is seen as a result of their culture and social norms:

> I work part time, and a lot of European parents work part or full time while the Pakistani women don't. Having said that, when I was trying to organize a meeting for the Pakistani party, it was difficult to get them to meet. I mean "you don't work, let's meet."...It must be because their culture is so different. Sometimes I don't think the women are very proactive. (Family Association coordinator 2, School A)

Apart from this, religious practices came up frequently when talking about the Pakistani and Moroccan families, as their community practices are regarded as getting in the way of school involvement. The Family Association coordinators complained that when some activities were organized, the families' priorities were to take their children to the mosque, which made it difficult to coordinate the schedule with them:

> The time for the activity was from 11:30 to 13:30 because the playground was open at that time. The Moroccans and Pakistanis are at the mosque [at that time]. But they are also at the mosque in the afternoon. (Family Association coordinator, School A)

Similarly, the school staff explain that there are different interests among the Muslim families in terms of extracurricular activities. The school staff perceive them as being less willing to enroll their children in creative activities, such as music and dance, because it goes against their religion.

Community and Social Cohesion Between Families

The educators at schools with more immigrants believe that there is less of a sense of community and cohesion among non-European families at schools with high diversity and weak relations among families of different immigrant groups. The Family Association coordinators point out the differences in the relations among the European and non-European families. They praise the strong network made up of immigrant families of European origin, characterized by solid relationships based on constant contact and reliance on one another. However, this is not the case with

non-European parents, with whom relations are perceived as more distant or almost non-existent. The relations that immigrant families have within their own community, such as going to their community celebrations or to the mosque, are not taken into consideration by the school.

In high diversity schools, it is believed that there is a stronger community in ones where native families prevail, and there is a perception that their Family Associations are more active in those schools: "There is no community in this school" (Family Association coordinator 1, School A), and:

> There is more cohesion in P3[5] in Catalan schools; because of the culture, they organize themselves and the trips they take by themselves. Here [in a high diversity school] the parents do not take the initiative. Here they rarely meet outside the school. (Teacher, School A)

This might not be necessarily true, as I have encountered the same concerns when talking to school principals who do not perceive much cohesion among families in schools with large local populations and where the activity and involvement of the families in the Family Associations are also low.

Even though the Family Associations usually have weaker organizational structures where there is more immigration (Paniagua, 2017), in the schools covered in my research, more activities and projects are organized by the ones in the schools with higher diversity. During the participant-observation at these schools' Family Associations, I observed that the staff and the Family Association coordinators, who are usually Spanish or from other European countries, are more committed and put in more effort to involve immigrant families, even if they are not sure about how this should be done. Meanwhile, in schools with lower levels of diversity, the staff and the Family Association coordinators tend to be less engaged and to lack mutual collaboration, and there are no special policies to counteract this. Schools D and E, even though they are composed of mostly native parents, ran few extracurricular activities and had low attendance from parents in the Family Association. Therefore, the schools with higher diversity end up organizing more activities, initiatives, and events, and the school and families tend to be more engaged overall than in schools with lower levels of immigration and whose Family Associations are not very active. This dynamic of school involvement creates the foundation for a trustful climate in diverse schools (Forsyth et al., 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, 2005; Houri et al., 2019).

The Cultural and Religious Demands of Immigrant Families

During the interviews at all schools examined in the fieldwork, the administration and education professionals expressed the opinion that

religion should be kept outside the public realm, of which the school is part. The Catholic religion is part of the official program, and therefore all schools are obliged to provide it, but the students can choose an opt-out class. No participating school offers Muslim or Protestant religious classes, even though they are legally provided for.[6] As the administration is against the idea of having classes related to any one religion in the official curriculum, no school principal has explained to immigrant families that they could potentially request a religion class.

Another issue related to religion, and a possible source of friction between the families and the school, is the largest immigrant communities' celebration of religious holidays:

> There are problems with schools that have a lot of immigration; the majority Muslim community asks for religious events to be celebrated in schools, like Ramadan....Here in Catalonia what happens is that the students don't go to school on that day [of a certain holiday].... Perhaps the school should reach an agreement with them. (Education inspector, Consortium of Education)

Additionally, the question of religion has come up mostly in discussions about the dietary needs of the Muslim families and the provision of halal food, as it has religious connotations. In two of the five schools in my research, the administration was hesitant to implement this dining option. For instance, in School A, it was only after several immigrant families complained to the city district that the administration started offering a halal option on the cafeteria menu. As the education inspector explained: "Introducing the halal menu was tricky; there was some controversy" (Inspector 1, Consortium of Education).

In a low diversity school, there was a notion that immigrant families needed to adapt to the requirements of the Catalan school system and that no religious exemptions should be made. Ultimately, the school staff praised the immigrant families that did not make demands outside the established norms:

> If a girl has to do physical education, then she does it. If you have to eat botifarra[7] you do it; one thing is if you say, I do not eat pork, fantastic, but why do we have to have halal?...I don't know; the Chinese don't make any demands. They come, they do their thing, and they leave....We wanted them to integrate so much that we forgot that the school is secular. (School principal, School E)

In schools with high diversity, the administration is more flexible in terms of what they view as proper integration. The general discourse is that

immigrant families should take their time and should not be obliged to assimilate completely to the requirements of the host education system nor be pushed against their will to engage in activities that are contrary to their religious and cultural beliefs.

Overall, the implementation of religious accommodations is unresolved in the Catalan education system. The school staff does not always inform immigrant families about their rights and which cultural and religious claims they can pursue. The implementation of the demands depends on the extent to which the families are persistent in their requests. In a context where each school decides upon if and how religious claims should be accommodated, the school administration and local families can easily oppose them being implemented.

Educational Values

There is a general view expressed by the school staff that non-European families are not as concerned with the education of their children as other families, and that their educational values are different from the school's. The school staff interpret the lesser involvement of immigrant parents in activities as a lack of interest that negatively affects the academic achievement of their children.

The school staff also regard the high mobility of immigrant families as causing problems in the educational achievement of these pupils. Teachers believe that immigrant families have other priorities, and the education of their children is not the most important one. Their cultural and education values are portrayed as being inadequate, as we can see in the following examples:

> They should understand that school is important. For them, school is important, but the family is even more important. Western culture is not like that. We can't do anything about this. (Teacher, School A)

> They are not involved. There are cultural differences that have a lot of impact. The parents don't care. (Teacher, School B)

Likewise, teachers have stated that immigrant parents are not able to support the children at home and to offer them a suitable home environment. Here are two responses to the prompt, "Are they [immigrant families] involved in their [children's] education?"

> It is very difficult to generalize; in some cases they do, but in other cases it is very hard to get them to collaborate and take responsibility for the education of their children. Children at this age need guidance at home so that they can help organize their academic tasks and

do their homework, and even though these families care about them, they do not have the necessary resources to help their children. So these families express their frustration. (Teacher, School D)

There is the issue that they [immigrant families] do not know how to help them with their studies. (Teacher, School B)

There is a vision that the children of immigrant families need to be educated according to local values, and that the parents need guidance to understand what is best for their children. Similarly, there is a tendency among school staff and education inspectors to have a low expectation of the immigrant families' abilities to provide the appropriate tutoring and support required for the children, or at least what they understand to be appropriate. The school staff hold the opinion that these families do not spend quality time with their children, something which would help them in their educational achievement.

The majority of these mothers do not work, but they are not there with the children; it is a different thing for them. These mothers think that spending time with the children is having them around. To me it means playing with the kids, participating, going to places together. They do not have the level....It is cultural. (Inspector 2, Education Consortium)

The families' educational expectations for their children are thought to be lower than those of the native population, since they have lower educational levels themselves. The education inspectors and teachers believe that this is even more acute with girls, since families have different standards for the future of boys and girls: "There are gender differences....They pay more attention to the boys. I've seen it there [in the school]. You should just see how the boys act and how the girls act" (Teacher, School B).

The education inspectors explained that the divergent values between the school and these families should be mitigated by introducing them to the principles and norms of the Spanish education system: "In the school they [educators] need to work with the mothers and work with them to bring them closer to our understanding" (Inspector 2, Education Consortium).

The families are portrayed as culturally distant, not straying from their own customs that alienate them from the host society, as opposed to European immigrants, whose habits are closer to the schooling system. According to education professionals, the linguistic, social, and family models that the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Moroccan families adhere to impede their "proper" integration. The main problems that were pointed out about

these families are differences in gender norms, non-working mothers who stay in their homes with no contact with the outside world, as well as their general mentalities. Because of this, these families are seen as an inadequate influence for their children.

School Practices

Increasing the Involvement of Immigrant Families

Schools with high levels of diversity have developed several initiatives to involve immigrant families. One of these initiatives, mentioned several times during the interviews, includes improving the communication strategies to reach immigrant families specifically. In most schools, the main events are usually communicated through the WhatsApp group of the Family Association, school message boards, websites, blogs, notifications in the children's school diary, and at an initial class meeting at the school. Activities are announced in the languages of the largest communities present in the school.

Nevertheless, even though the school administration believes that it provides abundant information, communication with the families is not necessarily effective. For instance, during fieldwork in School A and while talking with immigrant families after school hours, it came up that these families that the Family Association coordinators would like to involve are not included in the Family Association WhatsApp group or are not aware when the Family Association meets. The coordinators or the school staff are unclear about why such miscommunication might happen. As the school administration and Family Association coordinators stated, individual phone calls, emails, and other direct contact with the families are underused because they are time-consuming. However, in my observations, and coinciding with the findings of other school ethnographies (Garreta-Bochaca, 2009), those strategies would appear to be the most effective. This is the case in School B, which creates working groups with each main immigrant community and explains how the school works, thus increasing the participation of families in the meetings.

The data from participant-observations of parent–teacher and Family Association meetings shows that using translators and cultural mediators for the main meetings and activities helps increase the participation rate of the immigrant families. However, this practice is more problematic when there is a mix of nationalities, as it slows down the pace of the meetings and is only possible in schools with one predominant immigrant nationality.

Considering the gendered nature of school–family relationships in all schools with a considerable percentage of Asian and North African families,

the staff try to contact and engage with the mothers, as they spend more time with their children and are easier to reach than the fathers. One way of reaching out to the mothers is through offering them language classes taught by students from the school or by retired teachers. Another way is by giving a voice to immigrant families in the main participative bodies. For example, School A encourages families from the main nationalities to be represented in the school council, resulting in greater engagement. In addition, School C manages to involve families in the school's artistic projects. The families come to the class to see their children's artwork and then do an artistic project together or go around the school to see the various art pieces made by students.

It is in the two schools with less immigration that the administration does not know how to make the school meetings and activities more participatory and open and does not implement any special policies to specifically target immigrant families, as they also do not see it as an issue they need to address. Conversely, most initiatives take place in schools where immigration rates are higher, precisely because there is usually less participation in formal meetings.

Involvement in Family Associations

While carrying out the fieldwork in informal school meetings it was observed that high-diversity schools put considerable effort into involving immigrant families. One of these schools is School B, in which the Family Association coordinators tried to increase the involvement of parents from Pakistan and Bangladesh by providing a translator to communicate better with them. With the help of the translator, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi families expressed their needs and concerns regarding the school to the Family Association coordinators and school principal. Stemming from this, the school began to provide Urdu and Islam classes as extracurricular activities for the children and Spanish and Catalan classes for the mothers, as well as a lunch option in accordance with these families' dietary needs.

In School A, which has a very active Family Association that provides over 20 extracurricular activities, there were misunderstandings between the Family Association coordinators and immigrant families about the appropriate degree of parent involvement. The Family Association coordinators reiterated that immigrant families needed to participate more. Despite this, the coordinators were successful in managing to encourage immigrant families to join in by involving them in specific actions and in already decided projects, rather than invoking family involvement in general.

At this school, the Family Association organized a joint project involving two years of artistic and educational activities with a school in Pakistan. The Family Association coordinators took special care to involve the Pakistani families and to approach them directly. At first, problems in communication, as well as cultural differences, had to be overcome in order to reach the Pakistani mothers. The main organizer of this project, a mother from England, explained that she had to insist and persuade the Pakistani mothers to participate:

> It has taken me 5, 6 weeks to get the Pakistanis moms involved in the party, and I have to speak to them very slowly in Spanish. Their level of Spanish is very low, some of them do not speak English, I don't speak Urdu. It has been really difficult to get their help and input to help with the party this Saturday. The party is for everybody. We are celebrating the link between School A and the school in Pakistan....I send them voicemails because they cannot read or speak Spanish. Maybe two will come, and the others won't come. It's just like getting blood out of a stone. It's more of a cultural thing. (Family Association coordinator 2, School A)

The Family Association coordinator managed to establish a trustful relationship with the Pakistani families over time by involving a person who was influential in the community who brought together the others. After these new projects and initiatives were implemented, the Family Association coordinators were sure that they had managed to make the Family Association more inclusive for everyone. However, they emphasized that it was the Family Association coordinators who put in the effort, while the immigrant families were passive.

> None of the active organizers is Moroccan or Pakistani. They organized the Pakistani party, but it was the English mother who was the main organizer. This is the objective of the FA for this year. For the moment, we have made some progress so that they feel included, but they have still not taken the next step, which is to participate. (Family Association coordinator, School A)

Nevertheless, the project's events that were celebrated at the school were attended mainly by the Pakistani community and the Family Association coordinators, while the other nationalities did not participate. As with the mother-tongue language classes, they were attended solely by the children of immigrants and did not appeal to the local and European families. These extracurricular activities did manage to involve the Pakistani families more, but they did not foster intercultural relations.

Another example of a practice directed towards immigrant families is the case of School C, which has high levels of diversity and received support from the local government to found and organize a Family Association. A professional came to the school once a month and met with the parents to explain how the Family Association functioned. The engagement with the professional was successful, and she managed to establish the organizational structure of the Family Association by sending individual letters in the native language of the families, talking directly to parents, and encouraging them to become involved. Over the course of one school year, the Family Association was founded, and 53 families began to attend the activities.

The professional managed to bridge the gap between the school and the families by encouraging parents to share their ideas and concerns. An open and welcoming school climate was created so that parents felt they were needed at the school. Nevertheless, she felt that immigrant families had previously delegated responsibilities entirely to the school because of their lack of concern regarding involvement in their children's education:

> [Parents of] Different cultures do not see the importance of the talks. They want to leave the educational responsibility to the center. It's enough for them. They already trust the school. It's not important to them. They think "I've done my job by dropping my child at school, and I'm going home." Now they see the importance of extracurricular activities. (Municipality employee, School C)

The professional disregarded other ways in which immigrant families were involved in their children's education, at home or through their community. She only regarded parent involvement as them being involved in the Family Association, and she did not manage to see that their childrearing practices had anything to do with school. Her main mission was to bring the families closer to the local culture and way of life while the representation of the immigrants' culture was confined to the interculturality events that took place once a year.

Discussion and Conclusions

As we have seen from the data, and coinciding with previous research (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011), educators perceive that in high diversity schools, there are low levels of school trust. Although educators consider that there is a peaceful environment in these schools, they also perceive a deteriorated school culture (referring to norms and values) and a deteriorated school climate (in terms of quality of relations). Schools with high levels of immigration are not seen as having a

strong school community based on cooperation and cohesion, in which adults share a common vision, shared responsibilities, and a network of supportive relations, which are the principal characteristics of schools with high trust (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Van Maele et al., 2014). Moreover, teachers perceive immigrant parents as being neither involved enough in their children's education, nor providing appropriate home environments, nor transmitting the school's values at home. Therefore, the role of immigrant families towards the school is seen as deficient (Hatch, 2006).

For the interviewed education professionals, a trustful school environment is when families are very present, when they are involved in school activities, and transmit the values of the school at home. According to these education professionals, immigrant families just drop off their children at school and do not form a bond with the school community, since they have complete trust in the school's functioning. Apart from this, the school staff believe that immigrant families have different educational values compared to the western ones—values that do not align with the school's educational policies—and that they have certain cultural and religious demands that are incompatible with the school's requirements. Moreover, the cultural and religious practices of immigrant families and their parenting styles are seen as a source of intercultural conflict in schools. All of this has a negative impact on trust, as trust is more easily formed when there is understanding between parents and the school staff about the norms and values of education (Adams et al., 2009; Adams & Christenson, 2000). Thus, the indicators of trust that are affected negatively because of diversity are competence, as immigrant families are not seen as having the necessary skills, expertise, and reliability, as it is believed that they do not to provide a healthy home environment, and openness, as they do not communicate effectively enough with the school nor do they share information. However, they are portrayed as respectful towards the school.

The lack of communication and the misconceptions that the school and the families have about each other and the role that they should play creates barriers to building harmonious family–school relations (Conus & Fahrni, 2017; Garreta-Bochaca, 2008; Ferguson, 2008; Santos Guerra & Moreno, 2016; Tebben, 2017). The school staff appear to misunderstand if and how immigrant families are involved in their children's schooling and about their motivations, practices, and beliefs (Carrasco et al., 2009) making it harder for trustful relations to be formed (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Van Maele et al., 2014).

Culture and religion are seen as the primary reasons for their lack of involvement, while language, work schedules, lack of resources and knowledge

of the education system, and other barriers are seen as secondary reasons for their non-participation (Danielsen & Bendixsen, 2019; Yol, 2019). During the participant-observation in the fieldwork, immigrant families primarily referred to economic constraints for their reluctance to take part in creative activities, as well as a preference for their children to attend activities that might be more beneficial for their future. This aligns with their opinion that the school is already too lenient and that it should not be a place for play-related activities (Pamies Rovira, 2006). For families from non-Western countries of origin, leisure and artistic activities are considered to pertain to the sphere of entertainment and are not regarded as pedagogical. For these immigrant families, leisure is not linked to formal education, as it is for local families; it is seen as a Western concept (Bertran, 2005).

Therefore, the school staff's misguided assumptions and lack of knowledge of how much culture and religion influences immigrant families' decisions lead to misunderstandings between the families and the schools. The lack of information about immigrant families and their countries of origin contributes to perpetuating stereotypes about their lack of capacities and non-participatory education systems and leads to them to become further stigmatized (Pamies Rovira, 2006; Soutullo et al., 2016). These assumptions are produced without the school staff and professionals having any direct experience or real knowledge about the culture and school system in the immigrant families' countries of origin. They tend to disregard the class differences, private and public education systems, and rural and urban contexts that exist in these countries (Ríos-Rojas, 2014). This results in the school staff not understanding the reasons for these families not enrolling their children in extracurricular activities and impedes them making these activities more appealing to them (Conus & Fahrni, 2017; Garreta-Bochaca, 2008).

Furthermore, the demands of non-European parents are regarded as serving solely the interests of their own community, and their participation seems to be inadequate and overbearing (Daniel & Bendixsen, 2019). Consequently, despite the goodwill that the staff and Family Association coordinators invest in involving immigrant families, they try to confine them to the mainstream norms of parent involvement that have already been established by the more active parents, usually middle-class European families, and the school itself (Kohl et al., 2000). The school staff develops paternalistic or supportive relationships towards immigrant families depending on their socioeconomic status and place of origin (Bertran, 2005), and together with European families, they impose their own norms of family involvement (Paniagua, 2017). This leads to fewer opportunities for immigrant families' voices to be heard or for developing new ways of

participating that are more in line with the immigrant families' needs and interests (Bertran, 2005; Doucet, 2011; Quiñones et al., 2019). All of this contributes to less immigrant family involvement, less effective parental involvement strategies, and fewer opportunities for trustful relations to develop (Houri et al., 2019).

The culture of the parents (Olivos et al., 2011) and their involvement strategies (Banks & Banks, 2009; Martín Criado & Gómez Bueno, 2017; Olivos et al., 2011; Posey-Maddox, 2014) are regarded as deficient, and as needing to be compensated for rather than presenting any benefits. In addition, the lack of a clear integration policy and proper implementation of religious and cultural demands can create conflicts and tensions between immigrants and the schools (Garreta-Bochaca et al., 2022), as they might not be aware of the demands they can make to the school. This was the case when immigrant families demanded a halal meal option and met with resistance from other families and from the school, and also in the case of religious instruction in class, which families were not aware they could request.

Students' low academic achievement or any difficulties they experience at school are attributed to their home and family (Herrera et al., 2020). This is especially the case of Muslim families, since their religion is stigmatized and is seen as incompatible with succeeding in the Spanish education system. Therefore, the institutional view is that their integration in the schools should be achieved through assimilation, as they are not prepared for the requirements of the education system. However, data from my participant-observation indicate that immigrant families express high expectations of education for both their male and female children.

The schools' strategies to improve communication and parental involvement in schools did contribute to a higher presence of immigrant families in school activities, and it improved these families' communication with the school. In addition, the use of mediators did help bridge the gap between schools and immigrant families (Durham et al., 2019). In Schools A and B the mediators were used for initial school meetings to translate and inform immigrant families (mostly from Pakistan) about the school regulations. While in School B, the use of translators in the Family Association meetings helped immigrant families find their voice and explain what they expected from the school. In contrast, in School C a mediator was used for establishing the Family Association and increasing immigrant family involvement. However, the professional acquired the same stance as the school regarding immigrant families and transmitted the established school model of family involvement to them. Due to her insufficient knowledge about the cultures of the families and their parenting styles, she

viewed their way of bringing up their children as deficient. As for School B, the translator helped the Family Association coordinators and educators to get to know the needs and interests of the immigrant families. Therefore, for more sustainable initiatives, there is a need for professionals who are truly neutral actors to work with the school staff and the families and who can relate to both groups simultaneously. Accordingly, these professionals need to be familiar with the culture of the communities and the different ways parents from them are involved in their children's lives so that they can also present the families' views to the school. Similarly, professionals need to link school-based and home-based activities and support the learning that the families offer at home (Epstein, 2001).

For trust to be formed, parents should perceive an opportunity to be involved in their children's education and to influence school decisions (Adams et al., 2009; Adams & Christenson, 2000). The schools in my research did improve their communication and participation strategies; however, they did not fully manage to take into account immigrant families' needs, imposing the school's vision of parental involvement instead. Inadequate school policies, coupled with insufficient teacher training to work in intercultural contexts and lack of self-criticism by the educational institutions, hinders the integration of immigrant families into the school system (Santos Guerra & Moreno, 2016). The dominant forms of socialization and school practices pose barriers for incorporating the needs of immigrant families (Shiffman, 2019). By imposing an orthodox model of school participation and parenting, the school emphasizes the differences in the parenting styles of immigrant families, which (in their view) must be adjusted to the school dynamics (Paniagua-Rodríguez & Bereményi, 2019). In this way the responsibility falls on immigrant families, who are required to accept the school culture (Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021; Paniagua-Rodríguez & Bereményi, 2019) rather than the school being responsible for bringing the culture of the school closer to immigrant families. This results in the distancing of immigrant families from schools, making trustful relations harder to establish (Driessen et al., 2004; Shiffman, 2019). Schools occupy a privileged position and should be the ones to reinvent and rethink parent–school relations and involvement, thus increasing family–school trust (Tschannen-Moran 2014).

The trust that teachers place in parents and their communication and interactions with them are important for establishing family–school relations and determining the quality and tone that these relationships will have (Shiffman, 2019; Tschannen-Moran 2014). Thus, educators need to take immigrant families' values and home practices into account in order

to establish more trustful relations with them and match the interests of the families to the schools (Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2012; Quiñones et al., 2019). From the schools in my research, the data reveal that considering immigrant families' cultural and religious demands, their community activities, and instruction in their mother tongue—all making family involvement in school more culturally relevant for them—does increase immigrant families' interest and participation. Schools need to move away from what they consider to be the "right" way to participate and to be more understanding of the opportunities offered to families to participate and the ways of participating that work for them. The school should prioritize relationships with families by acknowledging the ways in which families are present and engaged in the education of their children, rather than their attendance at formal and informal meetings (Herrera et al., 2020). To increase trust schools need to engage immigrant families by providing a strong community, accepting their different needs, and sharing responsibility and power with them (Brault et al., 2014; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Roy, 2018; Sibley & Brabeck, 2017; Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015).

Identifying and resolving the misunderstandings and misconceptions between schools and families about the ways of participating is key to building more cooperative relations between them (Tebben, 2017). Moreover, clarity about mutual expectations and the roles of teachers, administrators, and parents results in better mutual understanding and more trustful relations between them (Carrasco et al., 2009). If one group neglects its responsibilities, trust can become diminished (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth et al., 2011; Van Maele et al., 2014). Therefore, the existence of clear roles and policies leads to a more trustful school environment.

Additionally, schools need to be aware of the unconscious dominance that local and other European families have over immigrant families from other regions and how that creates tensions among them. Catalan schools should try to be responsive to the needs of both groups (Danielsen & Bendixsen, 2019), as they currently prioritize the needs of middle-class European families. Furthermore, educators and Family Association coordinators perceive that schools with less diversity have stronger communities where solid links and relationships are formed among the educators, families, and students, and where everyone shares a common vision of schooling that results in a trustful environment with strong social network links (Coleman, 1990; Van Maele et al., 2014). However, these are all perceptions rather than objective views of the real situation in schools, since in high diversity schools I have observed local families putting considerable effort into building a strong community together with educators, which resulted in

plenty of activities and cohesion. The high degree of dedication and involvement of the educators and families there appeared to be forming the basis for trustful relations (Smylie et al., 2016).

Similarly to what often happens in family–school relations in North America, educators in Spain reflect the norms of dominant, middle-class families (Antony-Newman, 2019; Lareau, 2011). Educators in the U.S. express similar assumptions about immigrant families' reasons for non-involvement and lower levels of attendance, even though they do not have the necessary knowledge of these families' cultures and their countries of origin. As numerous pieces of research from the U.S. (Herrera et al., 2020; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Lareau, 2011; Leo et al., 2019) and Spain (Carrasco et al., 2011; Martín Criado & Gómez Bueno, 2017; Paniagua-Rodríguez & Bereményi, 2019; Santos Guerra & Moreno, 2016) have demonstrated, educators need a better understanding of the cultural and educational values of immigrant families. My findings also reflect research from the U.S. in funds of knowledge theory (Gonzalez et al., 2005), in which school teaching and norms are based on immigrant family knowledge; in addition, a change is made to the language of "deficiency" and the potential of students and families is used to understand how they can contribute to the school and its community (Gay, 2013; Herrera et al., 2020). This can help educators develop new practices that are more culturally relevant for immigrant families (Szech, 2021). Educators need to reflect on their practices and expectations on family–school relations in order to build trust with immigrant families. Finally, the school needs to standardize parent involvement, align family–school relations with immigrant families' interests and needs, clarify the parents' role towards the school (Reynolds et al., 2015), communicate directly with families, and accommodate their cultural and religious requirements.

Endnotes

[1]Extracurricular activities include afterschool sports and cultural, science, and technology activities.

[2]Department of Statistics, Municipality of Barcelona, 2018.

[3]Education inspectors carry out the inspection of the educational system in all schools, with the aim of ensuring the implementation of regulations and guaranteeing the exercise of rights. For these purposes, the supervision and evaluation of educational centers and services and recommendations given to them is entrusted to the Education Inspectorate.

[4]The Education Consortium is a co-management and decentralization instrument, within a framework of institutional collaboration; it represents the will of the Generalitat of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council to work together to improve services in schools and among citizens through a single educational network.

[5]Although it is not mandatory, in Spain most children between 3 and 6 years old attend

the second cycle of early childhood education in primary schools. P3 is the year for three-year-olds.

[6]The Constitution establishes in article 27.3 that "the public powers guarantee the right that assists the parents so that their children receive the religious and moral education that is in accordance with their own convictions." Additionally, the cooperation agreements between the Spanish state and the Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim communities guarantees specific religious education in public and private primary and secondary schools. In Catalonia at the moment there is no school that offers these classes because of a disagreement with the Spanish state about who should be financing them.

[7]A traditional Catalan pork sausage.

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Appendix: Interview Guide for the Participants of the Study

Teachers

- How many immigrant children do you have in the classes?
- What tools do you use in class with immigrant children?
- Do you have enough support from the school and the institutions to manage diversity in class?
- Any problems / challenges that you want to comment about?
- What do you think of the relationships between immigrant and native children?
- What do you think about the relationship between immigrant and native parents?
- Do parents of immigrant children come to meetings?
- Are they involved in their education?
- Have you noticed some differences between different nationalities regarding the education of their children?
- Do you think immigrant parents participate in school and have confidence in the school?
- What do you think could be done to make parents of immigrants more involved in school?
- How do you create a trustful relationship with immigrant families?
- What positive tools have you implemented to improve the interaction of natives and immigrants?
- What tools would you like to implement but you have not been able to (the reasons, which will almost certainly be a lack of resources: time, money, qualified personnel)?
- Have you done training to deal with diversity?
- Do you feel properly trained to deal with diversity or do you think that having the possibility of receiving specialized training would improve the situation?
- Have you had problems (related to diversity)?
- Are there any problems you were not able to resolve, or on the contrary, problems that you have been able to resolve?
- Could you give a diagnosis of the situation: that is, how are the intercultural relations in the classroom or in the school, what challenges have been overcome and which have yet to be overcome and how could they be overcome?

School Principal

- Can you comment on the school project and how does it deal with immigration?
- How do you feel about the integration of immigrant couples in the different activities of the school (Family Association, school council, etc.)?
- How do you create a trustful relationship with immigrant families?
- What positive tools have you implemented to improve the interaction of natives and immigrants?
- What tools would you like to implement but you have not been able to (the reasons, which will almost certainly be a lack of resources: time, money, qualified personnel)?
- Have you done training to deal with diversity?
- Do you feel properly trained to deal with diversity or do you think that having the possibility of receiving specialized training would improve the situation?
- Have you had problems (related to diversity)?
- Are there any problems you were not bale to resolve, or on the contrary, problems that you have been able to resolve?
- Could you give a diagnosis of the situation: that is, how are the intercultural relations in the classroom or in the school, what challenges have been overcome and which have yet to be overcome and how could they be overcome?

Education Inspectors

- Could you give a diagnosis of the situation: that is, how are the intercultural relations in the classroom or in the school, what challenges have been overcome and which have yet to be overcome and how could they be overcome?
- What are the main policies implemented concerning immigrant families in schools? Do you think they are sufficient? What would be your recommendations?

Family Association Coordinators

- How does your Family Association work?
- Which are the families most involved in the Family Association?
- How many immigrant families participate?
- How do you reach out to immigrant families?
- What activities have you implemented to improve the interaction of natives and immigrants?
- What activities would you like to implement but you have not been able to (the reasons, which will almost certainly be a lack of resources: time, money)?
- Have you had problems (related to diversity)?
- Are there any problems you were not able to resolve, or on the contrary, problems that you have been able to resolve?
- Could you give a diagnosis of the situation: that is, how are the intercultural relations in the Family Association, what challenges have been overcome and which have yet to be overcome and how could they be overcome?