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Latino parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's secondary education and the college preparation process

Ronald C. Heredia

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Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LATINO PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR

CHILDREN'S SECONDARY EDUCATION AND THE COLLEGE PREPARATION

PROCESS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Ronald C. Heredia

April, 2009

Diana Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D. - Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Ronald C. Heredia

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

October 28, 2008

Faculty Committee:

_____
Diana Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D., Chairperson

_____
Reyna Garcia Ramos, Ph.D.

_____
Bruce Barbee, Ed.D.

                                            _____
                                            Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D.
                                            Associate Dean

                                            _____
                                            Margaret J. Weber, Ph.D.
                                            Dean

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Marissa, to my children, Mateo and Ella, to my

parents, Ron and Paula, and to my grandma Mary and grandpa Manuel for their

unconditional love, support of me and my goals and for being my heroes.

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especially thank my aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and cousins for their love and support system that continues to provide strength. Additionally, my sincere thanks to Dr. Tom and Dr. Lily Rivera and the IEFL whose efforts, energy, time, and commitment are priceless and will forever remain dear to my heart. I appreciate my colleagues at Pepperdine University for sharing this journey with me to learn and grow. I value Aunt Patti and Grandma Socorro for their support, their translations and their willingness to help. Finally, my friends Amber, Debbie and Daniel: your friendship, and support are invaluable.

VITA

Education

2009	Ed.D., Organizational Leadership, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology
2003	M.A., Education with a concentration in Psychology, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology
2000	B.A., Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles

Professional Experience

2009	Psychology Instructor, East Los Angeles College Adjunct Faculty Course: Psychology 1 – General Psychology
2008	Psychology Instructor, East Los Angeles College Project Match Intern Course: Psychology 52 – Psychological Aspects of Human Sexuality
2008	Guest Lecturer, University of California, Los Angeles School of Education Course: Education 80 - Understanding The Collegiate Experience
2003 – Present	Director, Inland Empire Future Leaders (educational non-profit organization)
2000 – Present	Director , Westwood Evaluation & Treatment Center, Los Angeles
2002 - 2003	Substitute Teacher, Redondo Beach Unified School District, Redondo Beach

Research
_____

Heredia, R. (2009, April). *Perspectives of Latino Parents: Empowered Voices*. Paper accepted, American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Heredia, R. C., Weslow, D. & Heredia, P. (2009, January). *Curriculum and Implementation Techniques in an Educational Non-Profit Organization.* Paper presented, Hawaii International Conference on Education, Waikiki, HI.

Heredia, R. C., Weslow, D. & Ononiwu, A. (2008, January). *Organizational change; Strategies for leading change in school X.* Paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education, Waikiki, HI.

ABSTRACT

Involvement of Latino parents in their children's education and college preparation process is integral to the educational success of Latino students. This two-phase, mixed methods study explored the perspectives of Latino parents about their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process. First, archival data of the Path to College organization was examined for this study. Archival data were questionnaires completed by 132 Latino parents. Additionally, 5 separate semi-structured, face-to-face, focus groups were conducted with a sub-sample of 23 parents who had completed the questionnaire for the Path to College. All focus groups were conducted during the period of May through June, 2008.

Research questions addressed the collected data in accordance with social capital and cultural capital theories. A thorough analysis of data revealed that across the 5 focus groups, Latino parents expressed high at-home support for their children's present and future education. Latino parents want partnerships with their children's teachers, and schools, however, cultural factors often present challenges to these parents' involvement in their children's education and college preparation. Further, more than half (53%) of respondents reported that they did not feel comfortable knowing how they would pay for their child's college education while 43% reported feeling comfortable. Across focus groups, Latino parents indicated a need for information related to requirements and resources for higher education. Findings also revealed that 30% of respondents reported having completed up to the 12th grade or GED, 35.75% reported having completed 11th grade or below, 9.25 % completed an Associates of Arts degree, 4% completed a

bachelor's degree and 4% completed a master's degree. None of the respondents reported

having completed a doctorate or professional degree. To that end, Latino parents

expressed concern about the limited number of role models in their local groups and

communities with respect to higher education.

Additionally, findings revealed that 6 major themes emerged across focus groups:

leadership and parenting, family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks,

educational background and knowledge, information and resources. Each theme

represents a common thread uncovered through an extensive examination of the focus

group data and the archival data.

Chapter One:

The Problem

Introduction

Parents are, without a doubt, influential in the behaviors of their children from

birth. They have the capacity to shape their children's behavior on a daily basis. Cozolino

(2002) posits, "The organization of the social brain is initially sculpted via parent-child

interactions" (p. 217). For instance, a parent's involvement, support, and modeling during

infancy will influence a child's language acquisition (Barbre, 2003). The organization of

the child's thoughts and awareness does not stop at initial interactions with parents and

family; rather this involvement has the potential to continue through the child's

development to early adulthood and beyond (Hiatt-Michael, 2008). In fact, research

indicates that parent involvement in education and the college planning process has a

significant impact on student performance outcomes (Chavkin & Williams, 1989;

Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; McCarthy, 2000; Munter, Tinajero &

del Campo, 2007; Phillips, 1992; Quezada, Diaz & Sanchez, 2003; Torrez, 2004; Zarate

& Pachon, 2006). Thus, it is highly important for parents in our society to demonstrate

behaviors in alignment with the culture of the educational system in order to advance

student performance.

Parents have the potential to serve as an educational and motivational resource to

their children. The issue of parental involvement in a student's education is considered to

be significant for the achievement of students and for the success of the United States

(U.S.) educational system (Rolon, 2005). In 1994, the issue of parental involvement in

education was included on the national agenda for education by the United States

Congress and appeared on a list of national education goals. Goal eight on this list stated,

"By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental

involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of

children" (National Education Goals Panel, 1994). Furthermore, in 2001 the U.S.

government established the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for

Hispanic Americans in order to address family and parent involvement of the fastest

growing minority group in the nation. Educational statistics demonstrate that Latino

parents can improve behaviors and involvement in the education of their children for the

sake of their students' academic success (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Improved behaviors

and levels of involvement in children's education can be achieved through proactive

parents with genuine care and concern for their children's education, caring and helpful

teachers and school administrators, community programs and other social support

networks for parents.

The political, economic, and social systems of the United States and of the State

of California depend on the knowledge, innovative entrepreneurship and higher education

of its people (Phinney, Dennis & Gutierrez, 2005; Reid, 2001; Zakaria, 2006). All ethnic

groups, including native and immigrant, contribute to the well-being of a country.

However, national trends show that of every 100 Latino elementary students in the

United States, only 54 will graduate from high school. Of those 54 graduates, 11 will

graduate from college while only four will complete graduate or professional school and

one will receive a doctorate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The State of California includes

many predominantly Latino-populated communities and reports poorer levels of performance by Latino students as compared to the national average of Latino students (California Department of Education, 2005-2006; Rumberger & Larson, 1994). As cited in Wray (2005), one California school district, namely the Oakland Unified School District, reported that of every 100 Latino kindergartners in California, only 45 graduate from high school, six obtain an associate degree, six obtain a baccalaureate degree, one obtains at least a post baccalaureate degree, and one obtains a doctorate. Conversely, "of every 100 White elementary school students, 84 graduate high school, 26 graduate with a baccalaureate , and 10 earn a professional or graduate degree" (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006, 1).

Statistics for Latinos reveal that they are the fastest-growing ethnic group in California and in the United States. Thus, educational performance by this ethnic group is important to the economy of this state (Larson & Rumberger, 1995). Larson and Rumberger warn, "If California fails to address the Latino dropout problem successfully, it will have a large portion of the workforce with inadequate education to successfully contribute to the State's economy and to the social fabric of a democratic society" (p. 159). It is critical that society find ways to assist Latinos in attaining their academic goals to ensure both their individual success and their contribution to the nation's economic prosperity (Phinney et al., 2005). Hurtado and Garcia (1997) stated, "It will take a strong alliance between researchers and policymakers to open up the Latino educational pipeline" (p. 8). A first and crucial step in this direction will be to align Latino parents with educators and students in their perceptions of Latino parent involvement in

education and in the college preparation process. Therefore, for the sake of our nation and of California's communities, "local funds of knowledge" of Latino families should be addressed at all educational levels (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002, p. 623).

Several factors, including levels of parent involvement in the education of their children, can account for the apparent low educational success of Latino students in the U.S. (Bhachu, 1985; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; McCollum 1996). Hiatt-Michael (2005) asserted, "Parents across the globe, regardless of economic, social and cultural position, share the desire that their children will excel in school and acquire academic credentials" (p. 2). An educator from the Los Angeles Unified School District declared that parents of preschool children reported, "I want them to graduate and go to college" (W. Peel, personal communication, April 7, 2008). However, not all parents in the U.S. in general or California in particular have the knowledge of how to navigate the U.S. educational system or the social support networks needed to help them demonstrate behaviors in alignment with their beliefs and desires, in part because the parents have not been instructed on the typical behaviors that can help their children graduate and go to college. It is likely, though, that the achievement gap between Latino and non-Latino students can be minimized by increasing Latino parent involvement and by informing Latino parents about how their involvement, attitudes toward education and which specific behaviors are expected or known to improve student success.

Wyer (2007) reported that only 12.1 % of White students reported too little parent involvement in their educational lives, while 32.2 % of Latino students reported too little parent involvement in their education. Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown (1992) described

the student perspective similarly. They found that Latino students viewed their parents as having relatively low academic performance standards and perceived their parents as having lower performance standards than their Asian counterparts. A misalignment exists between what is expected of Latino parents and the actual behaviors of parents in regard to their involvement in the education of their children. Garcia-Ramos (2007) stated, "It is important to help parents understand what is expected of them and to help facilitate their involvement" (p. 37). The research mentioned above presents a sample of the literature on Latino parent involvement in school from the perspective of the educator and of the student. While those perspectives are important for improving Latino student achievement, an equally important perspective, that of the Latino parent, is lacking in the research. Therefore, this study will focus on the perspective of Latino parents.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that, while much is known about the positive impact of parent involvement in a child's education through the perspectives of educators and students, the literature provides minimal insight into Latino parent perspectives regarding their own involvement in their children's secondary education and college preparation. To fill this void, this study explored Latino parent perceptions about their own involvement in their children's secondary education and college preparation process.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study sought to explore and understand the perceptions of Latino parents about their own involvement in their children's education and how that involvement may contribute to educational success and/or failure in secondary school and college

preparation. To achieve this purpose, this study examined the perceptions that Latino parents hold about parent involvement, the information and resources they need in the areas of parenting, involvement in school activities, support with their children's schoolwork, and active regular communication with school personnel.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of Latino parents about parent involvement in their children's education?

2. What are the perceptions of Latino parents of the role of the school and of the teacher in their children's education?

3. What behaviors do Latino parents perceive as involvement in their children's education?

    3.1 What do Latino parents consider as involvement in their children's college preparation process?

    3.2. In what ways do Latino parents feel they contribute to their children's academic performance and college preparation process?

4. What do Latino parents perceive are factors that facilitate or challenge their efforts to support their children's education and college preparation process?

    4.1 What do Latino parents perceive are social issues that challenge or facilitate their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process?

    4.2 What do Latino parents feel are the cultural issues that challenge or facilitate their efforts to be involved in their children's education and college preparation process?

5. What information, resources, and guidance do Latino parents believe are needed to

    enhance their involvement in their children's education and the college preparation

    process?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on social and cultural capital

theories. Research has indicated that Latino students have been made disadvantaged by a

lack of social and cultural capital (Cantrell, 2003; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Social capital theory holds certain networks or relationships can offer an advantage or

assistance in a social situation. Cerna, Perez and Saenz (2007) define social capital as

"the relationships a student has with key figures that may provide them access to

resources and knowledge pertinent to college enrollment and degree attainment,

specifically the relationships with his or her parents, with high school faculty and staff,

with mentors, and with his or her peer groups" (p. 2). Further, Sheldon (2002) suggests

that "those with access to more social capital are more likely to be involved in their

child's education" (p. 311). However, Latino parents and families who experience

challenges such as language or communication disconnect with English speaking teachers

and school administrators, finances, low-levels of education and undeveloped knowledge

of the U.S. educational system, to being involved in their children's education may need

capital themselves. Thus, with such extreme challenges parents and families do not

typically have the capacity to serve as social capital for their children. Therefore, Latino

youth are forced to seek social networks from mentors and outreach programs. According

to Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), social capital for the working class and

minority youth is either lacking or found outside of the home and with schools or

community organizations. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch state, "Social capital refers to

social relationships from which an individual is potentially able to derive institutional

support, particularly support that includes the delivery of knowledge-based resources, for

example, guidance for college admission or job advancement" (p. 118).

Moreover, Cerna et al. (2007) define cultural capital as "a student's perceptions,

aspirations and cultural values related to college choice" (p. 2). In reference to the parent,

a Latino parent's cultural capital includes language, expectations and socioeconomic

status (SES), which are predictors of the quality of social capital that the parent will

provide for the child (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Additionally, Yosso (2005)

states,

> According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural
> knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in
> society. Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital (i.e., education, language), social
> capital (i.e., social networks, connections)…can be acquired two ways, from
> one's family and/or through formal schooling. (p. 76)

Parents hold the power to provide their children culture capital and social capital that are

much needed, especially by Latino students. However, when parents are not equipped

with rich capital they will not be a valuable source of capital for their children.

The theoretical framework provides a foundation for studying and thinking about

Latino parent involvement as one of the contributing factors for student academic

performance and college enrollment. Examining the perspective of Latino parents about

parent involvement in education will provide insight to what is needed to enrich parents'

capital so that they may be a strong source of capital for their children. This foundation

should help educators and policymakers integrate the findings and discussions that emerge from this study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it will advance knowledge in the area of Latino parent involvement in education because it is imperative that the views and perceptions of Latino parents be understood. The views and perceptions of these parents are important for the state of our nation, as policymakers, educators and educational organizations must have access to insight that will enable proactive efforts to involve Latino parents in the education of their children. The data collected from this mixed methods study and their analysis reveal implications for policymakers, outreach programs, educational non-profit organizations, school personnel, students and communities in providing a springboard for Latino parent involvement in their children's education and preparation for college enrollment. Additionally, these parties will be able to make informed decisions on how to embrace Latino parents and enhance their involvement in the education of Latino students throughout the United States.

School officials need Latino parents to make a contribution to the educational performance of their children. Since the Latino population is the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States and the largest ethnic group in the state of California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), school officials would be doing themselves a disservice if they did not act upon the need for greater Latino parental involvement. Enhanced parental involvement in education will likely improve Latino student attendance rates in school, which will, in turn, bring in more money for the individual schools from the State

Department of Education (Anderson, 2004). Additionally, an increase in parental involvement will likely improve Latino student academic performance, which will complement the efforts of educators and administrators through increased graduation rates, improved standardized test scores, decreased dropout rates and decreased community crime (Perez, 2000; Phinney et al., 2005). Latino parents, students and schools have a shared interest in increasing their involvement in the education and college preparation process of Latino children. Not only will increased Latino parent involvement also increase the communication and relationships within families, students will likely experience educational, life and financial success.

Clearly, the selected community selected for this study also has a shared interest in promoting increased Latino parent involvement in education. The Inland Empire is one region of California that is highly concentrated with predominantly Latino-populated communities (California Department of Education, 2005-2006). The Inland Empire is a region of Southern California made up of communities in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The 2006-2007 public records of the California State Department of Education report that Latinos make up 55% (463,442) of all students in the Inland Empire (840,642). In comparison, Latino students make up 48.1 % (3,026,956) of all students in California (6,286,943).

With more parent involvement, the Inland Empire communities will likely benefit from the improved educational performance of Latino students. Improved educational performance can reduce crime, teen pregnancy, improve standard of living for residents and improve economic and political systems (Phinney et al., 2005; Valencia, 1997).

Economically, the Inland Empire will improve as its residents attain higher levels of

formal schooling and assume lucrative occupations. College education will also prompt

many residents to innovate using entrepreneurial practices, thus creating more jobs and

generating more revenue for the community (Zakaria, 2006).

Terms and Definitions

Several specific terms are used in this study. Definitions of these terms for the

purpose of this study are as follows:

Latino. An individual living in the United States who is of Mexican,

Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin. May

also be described using the term Hispanic (http://dictionary.reference.com/).

Chicano/a. A person of Mexican origin, living in the United States

(http://www.chavez.ucla.edu/resources/SBplan.pdf).

Parent. A mother, father or legal guardian of a student (http://dictionary.

reference.com/).

Academic-performance. Measured by grade point average and testing scores in

secondary school or college.

College preparation process. The process and requirements essential for

preparing for students' application to and enrollment at a college or university.

Cultural capital. Forms of knowledge, skill, education, any advantages a person

has which give him or her an advantage in a social culture (Bourdieu, 1986).

Dropout. An individual who withdraws from school before graduating from

secondary school (http://dictionary.reference.com/).

Path to College (fictionalized name). An educational non-profit organization in Southern California with the mission to serve its community by providing Latino students with skills and knowledge that will increase academic achievement and college enrollment rates (T. Rivera, personal communication, August 8, 2007).

Social capital. Social networks, connections a person has which give him or her a advantage in a social culture (Bourdieu, 1986; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Parent involvement. Parent participation and attendance at school-related functions with the intent to impact achievement outcomes. Also, parenting, assisting children with schoolwork, providing educational information, engaging in active regular communication with school personnel, and communicating family morals and values (Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parent perceptions. A parent's held beliefs.

School-related activities. Attendance at athletic events, school club events, school committees, parent-teacher night, parent-teacher conference, parent-counselor conference, etc.

Socioeconomic status. A measure of a family's economic and social ranking (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/yi/y9661a.asp).

The Inland Empire. Consists of the areas of San Bernardino and Riverside counties in Southern California (http://www.inlandempire.us/).

Limitations

The research in this study was confined to exploring the perceptions of parents of secondary school students in the Inland Empire region of Southern California, U.S.A.

about their involvement in their children's education. Additionally, for this study, survey and focus group respondents were limited to those identifying with the Latino ethnic group. The respondents were selected from a sample population associated with a private, non-profit organization. The parents associated with that organization have certain characteristics that may pose limitations: their children had a minimum 2.8 GPA in the eighth or ninth grade. Furthermore, all respondents demonstrated involvement in their children's education as they volunteered to attend a one-day educational event in summer, 2007 and they appeared and participated in the focus group discussions that followed. Consequently, this group of Latino parents may not be representative of the larger group of Latino parents in this country. Finally, this study has a relatively small sample of 23 parents.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review

Introduction

Latino students collectively demonstrate low academic achievement, low high

school graduation rates throughout the educational pipeline (Hiatt-Michael, 2007) and

low rates of college enrollment ("From Risk to Opportunity," 2003). Additionally, Latino

parents have undeveloped knowledge and access to resources that can aid them in

demonstrating greater levels of involvement in their children's education that is needed to

enhance academic achievement, high school graduation, and college enrollment rates

(Bhachu, 1985; McCollum, 1996). The review of the literature will examine the existing

research, theories and methodologies relative to the problem identified in this research

study.

Research literature reveals that parent involvement in the education of their

children correlates strongly with student academic success (Chavkin & Williams, 1989;

Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; McCarthy, 2000; Munter et al., 2007;

Phillips, 1992; Quezada et al., 2003; Torrez, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). The

literature also supports the notion that partnerships between parents and schools help

ethnic minority parents and their children succeed in educational settings (Garcia-Ramos,

2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Moll & Ruiz, 2002). However, studies are limited in the area

of Latino parent perceptions of their own involvement in their children's education. The

lack of the Latino parent perspective in the parent involvement literature results in

theories and assumptions that neglect significant sociocultural characteristics necessary to

design appropriate educational programs and policy. This chapter will present a review of the literature on the current state of Latino student performance, parent involvement in education, Latino parent involvement, student, teacher, and parent perspectives about parent involvement, and social- and culture-based research.

Current State of Latino Students

Latinos in the United States

The United States and the rest of the world will feel the effects of an increase in Latinos admitted to four-year universities. According to Zakaria (2006), "The U.S. is currently ranked as the second most competitive economy in the world…and is first in technology and innovation, first in technological readiness, first in company spending for research and technology and first in the quality of its research institutions" (p. 3). Zakaria also proposes that the U.S. is the most powerful nation in the world because of its economic market, technological advances, and political democracy, which are all efficient because of the immigrant population in the United States. Without a doubt, Latinos make up a large portion of the immigrant population in the United States. Daniel A. Carp of Eastman Kodak (as cited in Reid, 2001) believes, "The United States must take advantage of its racial and ethnic diversity from the classroom to the boardroom. Leaving a segment of the population behind would be 'relegating ourselves to second place'" (p. 3). Similarly, Hiatt-Michael (2008) recommends, "the schools must open doors to parents, all family members, and the community in order to meet public demands for educated students that can compete in the world market" (p. 61).

"Hispanics have the highest dropout rate among the major ethnic groups in the United States" (Rumberger & Larson, 1994, p. 142). In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 37% of Latinos do not finish high school (Valladares, 2002). In 2007, it was forecast that only an estimated 53.2% of Latino students in the United States who enter 9th grade will complete the 12th grade and graduate, which means that roughly half (46.8%) of all Latino students will drop out of the educational pipeline (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). According to Senator Hilary Clinton (2004), every day in the United States, 561 Latino high school students drop out of school. Additionally, only 24.7% of Latinos ages 18 to 24 in the United States were enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2004, compared to 41.7% of Whites and 31.8% of Blacks (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). "Neither the college enrollment nor completion rates of Latinos have increased over the last 20 years" (The Education Trust, 2003, p. 1).

Latinos in California

Latino students in California demonstrate similar need for improved educational performance as Latino students demonstrate throughout the United States. There were nearly 34,000,000 people in California in 2000. In that year, the California population was made up of 10,966,556 Latinos, of which 8,455,926 were of Mexican descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Clearly, Chicana/os (Mexican Americans) comprise the largest subgroup of Latinos in California and throughout the United States (Huerta-Macias, 1998; Rumberger & Larson, 1994). Moreover, according to Rumberger and Larson, Mexican Americans "generally have the lowest socioeconomic status and the lowest level of educational attainment of all the Hispanic subgroups" (p. 155). Nevarez (2001)

reported that Mexican American students are least likely, when compared to their counterparts, to complete secondary school, enroll in college, and graduate with a degree. According to Huber, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, and Solorzano (2006), Chicana/os and Salvadorans have the most need for improved performance of all Latinos throughout the educational pipeline.

The number of Latinos enrolled in higher education is not, and never has been, proportional to the large population of Latinos (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). As such, California communities have not seen improvement in the academic achievement levels or college enrollment rates of Latinos for decades. According to the California Department of Education, in the 1991-1992 school year, Latino students accounted for 51% (36,810) of all dropouts (72,454) in California and they accounted for 56% (38,402) of all dropouts (68,166) in the 2005-2006 school year. Additionally, it is reported that in the 2000-2001 school year in California, there were nearly 48,000 dropouts in grades 9-12 (Huezo, 2003). Huezo also reported that, of those dropouts, 52.1% were Latino students; whereas, White students accounted for only 23.7% of those dropouts.

According to statistics form the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) the average annual earning from employment for individuals 18 years and over was $18,793 for non-high school graduates, compared to $50,623 for those holding a bachelor's degree. In this regard, Larson and Rumberger, (1995) contend, "Dropouts are more costly to society than high school graduates" (p. 158). Cantrell (as cited in Larson & Rumberger, 1995) reported that dropouts from Los Angeles city schools from one year were responsible for a loss in earnings of an estimated $3.2 billion and cost more than $400 million in social

services. The cycle of low socioeconomic status California communities will continue until Latino students improve their academic performance and increase in four-year university enrollment proceeding to graduation.

According to Reed (2006), 35% of California's high school graduates are Latino. Of the 349,094 total high school graduates in California in the 2005-2006 school year, 124,563 (35.7%) were Latino. Additionally, of all Latino graduates (71,466) in the 1992-1993 school year, 20% (14,634) graduated with University of California and/or California State University eligibility requirements compared to 26% (31,787) of all Latino graduates (124,580) in the 2005-2006 school year; whereas, 60% of Asian graduates and 40.2% of White graduates met the minimum eligibility for UC/CSU admission in that year (California Department of Education, 2005-2006). Consistent gaps in achievement unfavorable to Latino students throughout California has resulted in low rates of enrollment at four-year universities for this student group. In fact, Huber et al. (2006) point out that Latino students are "severely underrepresented at four-year colleges and universities and in graduate and professional programs" (p. 2).

It is reported that in the year 2000, Latinos represented 42.4% of all people in the 18-24 age group in California but only made up 24.3% of all students enrolled in California public colleges that year (Huezo, 2003; "Survey Reveals," 2000). Further, in 1990, only 7.1% of Latinos 25 years old and over held at least a bachelor's degree, which increased to only 8.4% in 1998 (Huezo, 2003; "Survey Reveals," 2000). Finally, a study of the perceptions of California Latinos ages 18-24 revealed that while 98% of respondents felt that a college education is important for success in life, over half of all

respondents held the belief that students must be U.S. citizens to apply for college and financial aid (Zarate & Pachon, 2006).

Latino Communities

Latino families have densely populated communities in California and the educational success of Latino students in the communities can determine the communal outlook. Poverty, crime, and teen pregnancy in communities are typical indicators of low academic achievement by students (Haro, 1976; Perez & Salazar, 1997; Phinney et al., 2005; Rumberger & Larson, 1994; Valencia, 1997). Since Latinos experience leaks in their educational pipeline, they are not attaining admission to four-year universities in high numbers (Huber et al., 2006), as compared to students of other ethnic groups, and, thus, are not typically qualified for the higher-paying, white-collar jobs in their communities. Likewise, according to Martinez, DeGarmo, and Eddy (2004), "Students who drop out from school experience lower income, greater unemployment, are significantly overrepresented in the adult corrections population, and are more likely to require social services during their lifetimes compared to high school graduates" (p. 129). Valladares (2002) reported that over 50% of state prison inmates are high school dropouts.

Latinos have a lasting impact on the American work force, and the personal income of the American work force will drop significantly in coming years unless states and communities focus on educating Latinos and other minority ethnic groups (Reed, 2006; Valladares, 2002). Valladares (2002) cites the findings from a study conducted by The Latino Scholarship Fund and the Rand Corporation: "the benefit of having college-

educated Latinos in higher-paying jobs available only to college graduates would represent higher taxes, contributions to social security, and disposable income that Latinos would be able to plow back into the economy" (p. 37).

Factors Affecting Achievement and College Enrollment

Various factors play a role in the educational performance and college enrollment rates of students. For the most part, these influential factors are categorized by community, school, and home (Epstein,1990; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Levine, 1998; Michael, Dittus, & Epstein, 2007). Epstein (as cited in Hiatt-Michael, 2008) developed a theoretical model of these factors and called them *Overlapping Spheres of Influence.* According to the Overlapping Spheres of Influence model, community, school and home, together play a significant role in shaping the educational performance and college enrollment opportunities for children (Michael et al., 2007).

Community

The environment and various elements of the community in which a child participates are likely to influence a child's educational performance as well as the child's preparation for college enrollment (Michael et al., 2007). Peer groups in the child's life and in his or her surrounding community will affect the child's educational outcomes (Hartnett, 2008). Peer groups serve as social networks providing cultural, emotional, and social support for Latino youth. These networks have the potential to provide the social capital (resources) to foster school achievement in spite of the many stressors experienced by this ethnic group (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). Additionally, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the community in which the child lives will impact

educational outcomes and preparation for college enrollment (Moll & Ruiz, 2002). For

instance, communities with low SES will likely have less educational and outreach

resources available to enhance and stimulate educational outcomes and the college

preparation process (Campbell, 2000).

Community outreach programs and adult mentors can also impact a student's

educational achievement and college enrollment outcomes (Olivo, 2009). According to a

study of Latino students who participated in a non-profit community outreach program

for Latinos, 100% of the respondents graduated from high school, 59% reported having

earned a bachelor's degree, 22% reported having earned a master's degree, and 7%

reported having earned a doctorate (Olivo, 2009).

School

The environment and various entities of the school with whom a child interacts

are also likely to influence the child's educational performance, as well as the child's

preparation for college enrollment (Michael et al., 2007). Among the most significant

influential factors of the school on educational performance and preparation for college

enrollment are teachers and the child's peer group (Hartnett, 2008). Anderson (2004)

reported finding that the teacher-student relationship is essential in keeping Latino

students in the educational pipeline. Anderson also reported that educators' sensitivity to

cultural factors and cultural differences are among the most influential factors of the

school environment in pushing Latino students out of school. However, such sensitivity

can be difficult when teachers may not be able to relate, culturally or socially, with

Latino students. In general, a shortage of Latino teachers and bilingual Spanish-speaking teachers exists (Solorzano & Solorzano, 1995).

According to the conclusions established by Epstein and Sanders (1998), schools must establish partnerships with family and communities. School, family and community partnerships will guide parent involvement and ultimately help improve student educational success. It is the outreach by the schools that with determine whether, which, and how parents become involved in their children's education. "Across nations, if schools reach out, then parents will become partners in their children's education regardless of income level, education level, where they live, how many adults are at home, or any other factor" (Epstein & Sanders, 1998, p. 392). Teachers and administrators need the motivation to prepare to build the partnerships that will encourage parent involvement (Martinez et al., 2004). Ultimately, increased parent involvement is an ingredient for positive educational outcomes and preparation for college enrollment (Epstein & Sanders, 1998). Hiatt-Michael (2001a), asserts

> Teachers' efforts to involve families promote the following: better student attendance; higher graduation rate from high school; fewer retentions in the same grade; increased levels of parent and student satisfaction with school; more accurate diagnosis of students for educational placement in classes; reduced number of negative behavior reports; and, most notably, higher achievement scores on reading and math tests. (p. 1)

Likewise, a study by Heredia, Weslow and Ononiwu (2008) reported the themes of relationships, community, awareness, commitment, power and involvement emerged when school officials made concerted efforts to involve Latino parents in their school's efforts to improve academic performance.

Home

The environment and various factors of the home in which a child lives are likely to influence the child's educational performance as well as the child's college enrollment opportunities (Michael et al., 2007). A significant influence on educational performance and college enrollment opportunities within the home environment is parental involvement (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Epstein & Sanders, 1998; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; McCarthy, 2000; Phillips, 1992; Quezada et al., 2003; Torrez, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Quezada et al. found, "Research indicates that tremendous academic achievement results when parents or family members become involved in students' education" (p. 32). According to McCarthy (2000), parent involvement in their children's school activities often leads to higher grade point averages. Parent involvement can yield social capital that contributes to educational achievement and college enrollment (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Essentially, a parent is expected to be a leader within the family structure (Valdés, 1996). Epstein (1995) expressed the idea that one reason for developing school, family and community partnerships is to increase parents' skills and leadership. In a sense, Latino parents serve as leaders of their family unit where the family unit functions as an organization. In order to be an effective leader impacting the educational achievement of children, parents may need to be highly visible in the student's personal and educational life (Munter et al., 2007). Schein (2004) stated, "Leaders of organizations generally seem to know that their own visible behavior has great value for communicating assumptions and values to other members" (p. 258). Similarly, Robbins (2005) has suggested that the

leader of an organization needs to act as a "visible role model, communicate ethical

expectations, provide ethical training, visibly reward ethical acts, punish unethical ones,

and provide protective mechanisms for preserving its culture" (pp. 240-241). In much the

same way, parents who demonstrate high visibility within the family unit and in the

educational and personal lives of high school students are likely to foster achievement.

In her dissertation study, Davern (1994), described highly visible parents as

"attending school activities, being present at both general and special education meetings,

introducing themselves to superintendents and others who were in powerful positions in

district hierarchies, and volunteering at the school in a variety of capacities" (pp. 67-68).

Weick (2001) suggests that over time and with patience, the culture of the organization

(family) will become high performing, with aligned assumptions and values, to the

degree that high visibility of the leader figure will no longer be necessary. This is true of

leaders in all arenas, according to Weick. However, family interaction in the home is

becoming increasingly difficult, especially for low-income Latino families.

> More mothers and fathers share family leadership, more jobs exist in cubicles
> with social interaction occurring through technology, hours of work have
> lengthened and diversified throughout the day, and, increasingly, more parents are
> employed in different patterns of work hours. (Hiatt-Michael, 2008, p. 60)

According to a recent study for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 47% of

participants who were all high school dropouts, asserted that their parents' work

schedules inhibited them from being involved in the education of their child (Bridgeland,

DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). Bridgeland et al. also reported that those surveyed felt

communication between schools and parents, and overall increased parental involvement

in their education is key to keeping students in school. Unfortunately, many students may become lost in the educational system, largely because they are not privy to families with skills, time, or understanding of how to navigate the educational system for their children. Historically, the U.S. educational system has become so increasingly complex and different from educational systems of other countries that it has resulted in a sense of disconnect and powerlessness for Latino parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2008).

Effects of Parent Involvement

It is crucial for parents to continue involvement in their children's education in order for the child to excel through the educational pipeline. Parent involvement has been known to be more frequent at varying school grade levels (Davern, 1994; Ziegler, 2000). According to Griffith (1998) and Ziegler (2000), parents typically demonstrate more prevalent involvement in their children's education at the elementary level than at the middle school or high school levels. Ziegler stated, "A spiraling decline of parental support is evident in most high schools around the nation, with more than 70% of urban school leaders recently citing the scarcity of active parental involvement as a major dilemma in their schools" (p. 22). Additionally, Olvera (2004) reported that, in her study most Latino parents with children under the age of 12, were actively involved in their child's education with high levels of communication with school personnel and educators. Cooper, Lindsay, and Nay (2000) reported findings from a study of second- to twelfth-graders that parents allowed older children more autonomy with homework. Torrez (2004) also cited parent reports of a stronger disconnect between themselves and school educators at higher grade levels than at lower grade levels.

Though many researchers report findings similar to those above, others report that students spanning the spectrum of grade levels will perform and achieve better academically and have a better attitude toward education when they have adequate parental involvement (Epstein, 1990; Villasenor-Ortiz, 2001). Parent involvement is not only necessary at the elementary school level, but also through middle school, high school, and college. This is especially true since the large majority of dropouts occur during grades 9-12. Coincidentally, these are the grade levels where research indicates the highest drop off of parental involvement (Torrez, 2004). The challenge is a matter of reaching out to parents.

Latino Parent Involvement

"Why can't parents come to Back to School Night? It's only one night a year" (McCollum, 1996). This is a common concern about Latino parents expressed by educators. Latino parents are not aware of expectations or methods of effective involvement in their child's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991) and college preparation. These parents interface with teachers significantly less than non-Latino parents do (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992b). Also, Latino parents may tend to convey lower expectations than non-Latino parents for their children's educational success (Martinez et al., 2004). Conversely, middle-class, non-Latino parents in the United States typically demonstrate their value for education by attending school functions, volunteering in schools, helping with homework, and teaching letters and numbers prior to the child beginning school (Perez & Salazar, 1997). Literature indicates that Latino parents do not demonstrate behaviors that are aligned with the culture of the U.S. educational system. In the

American system of education, it is expected that value for education is communicated by

parents to their children, and teachers typically hold expectations for parents to actively

participate and show concern for their students' educational success. In her study of

Latino parents, Valdés (1996) reported hearing concerns from teachers such as:

> These children are not learning…The problem is the parents…They don't care
> about education. They just won't do for their children what they need to do to
> help them succeed. They have little education, and many are even illiterate. (p.
> 191)

Whle parents in the Latino ethnic group typically hold very high educational

expectations for their children's future (Reese, Gallimore, Goldenberg & Balzano, 1995),

they also tend to experience more challenges than non-Latino parents on social and

cultural levels that serve to limit their involvement in education and the college

preparation process (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Bouffard, 2006; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996,

2004; Habermehl, 2006; Martinez et al., 2004; Rivero, 2006).

Challenges to Effective Parent Involvement

Challenges experienced by parents limit their involvement in their children's

education, which can have a direct impact on a child's educational performance. Latino

children, especially those of low-income families and without highly educated family, are

in need of cultural and social support that would provide direct access to educational and

social resources (Habermehl, 2006; Martinez et al., 2004). Chavkin and Williams (1989),

surveyed parents and reported, "The need for minority parent involvement is well

documented. Reviews of research clearly indicate a strong positive relationship between

parent involvement and student achievement" (p. 119).

From a student perspective, Latino parents can serve as a challenge to the student's college preparation when parents are hampered by undeveloped knowledge of the English language, hold values and morals that are not aligned with college-preparation requirements, and have little or no educational preparation themselves (Cantrell, 2003; Ceballo, 2004). Latino students reported that a lack of parental involvement resulted in seeking other role models and mentors to fulfill their educational involvement needs (Ceballo, 2004).

Latino parents refrain from participating in school functions because of "their inability to communicate with teachers and staff in English" and to avoid attention by immigration personnel in the many cases where Latino parents are undocumented (McCollum, 1996, p. 3). These parents are also reported to have low levels of awareness of educational outreach programs that are established to aid their involvement (Armenta, 1993). Perez (2000) reported that roadblocks to the involvement of Latino parents in the education of their children and the college preparation process include: communication barriers, negative experiences with teachers and counselors, their children as barriers, social climate concerns, lack of knowledge about college eligibility, and cost and lack of knowledge about standardized tests.

Okagaki and Frensch (1998) found that Latino parents did not feel as confident as non-Latino parents in their ability to help their children succeed in school. The gap in parental involvement between ethnic groups in the United States is likely due to social and cultural factors that often include language challenges, socioeconomic status, parents' low levels of education, poor access to transportation and daycare, work

obligations, and a lack of understanding of the United States educational system (Avaria-

Verdadeiro, 2007; Rivero, 2006). Hiatt-Michael (2005) discussed four forces that

influence parent and family involvement. The four forces are cultural values, economic

conditions, social structures and political pressures.
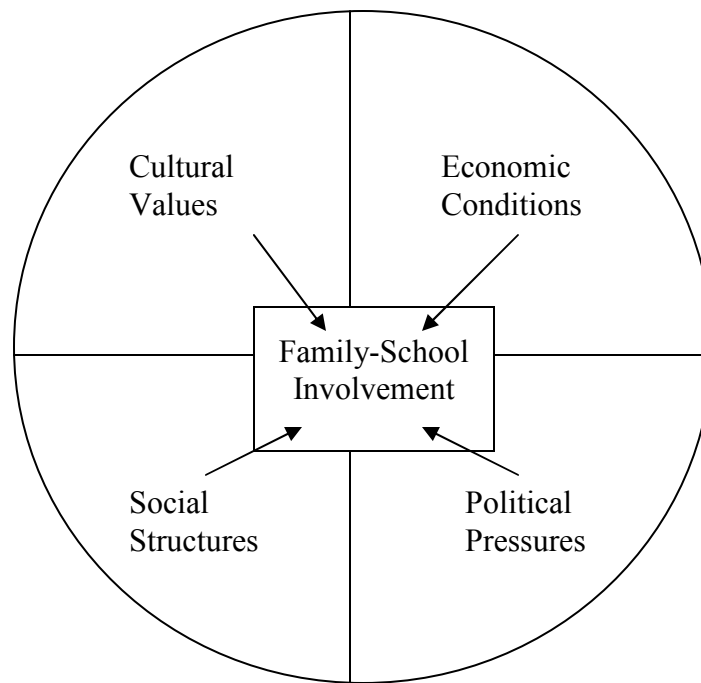
Figure 1. Four forces influencing family involvement. From *Practices for Family
Involvement in Schooling across the Continents* by D. B. Hiatt-Michael, 2005,
Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publications. Reprinted with the permission of the
author.

The four forces in Figure 1 can fall under categories of social and cultural constructs. As

such, most barriers experienced by Latino parents can be categorized by social and

cultural constructs.

Social Construct

   Educational knowledge. Research demonstrates that one challenge to higher

levels of parental involvement in education is the undeveloped knowledge of the U.S.

educational system among Latino parents (Armenta, 1993; Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007;

Ceballo, 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Habermehl, 2006; Torrez, 2004; Valdés, 1996). It is

reported that Latino families are unaware of the expectations held by teachers and public

schools (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Habermehl, 2006; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; Rivero, 2006;

Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). This undeveloped awareness often leads to

Latino parents being ill-prepared to provide their children with educational assistance

such as help with school work and educational planning (Ferguson, 2007; Valdés, 1996).

Levine (1998) reported that barriers to Latino parent involvement in education exist at the

home level: "At home, a parent feels unable to provide homework assistance" (p. 48).

According to Valdés (1996),

> It is important to note that the Mexican educational system does not exactly
> parallel the educational system in the United States. The former is divided into the
> following levels: preschool education, primary education, lower secondary
> education, upper secondary education, and higher education. (p. 174)

"Many Latino parents, particularly immigrants, receive little if any formal

schooling themselves, resulting in unfamiliarity with the educational system" (Perez &

Pinzon, 1997). Parents with high education levels are more involved in their children's

education than those with less formal schooling (Fernandez, 2005; Villasenor-Ortiz,

2001) and feel more comfortable in their ability to make a contribution (Phillips, 1992;

Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) asserted,

"self-perceptions of specific skills and knowledge will influence the type of involvement

parents choose: in general, they will tend to choose involvement forms in which they

believe they can be successful" (p. 317). Moreover, Peng et al. (as cited in McMillan &

Reed, 1994) reported that less than 11% of student respondents who had parents with

below a high school education were classified as resilient. Conversely, 23% of

respondents in the Peng et al. study whose parents had a high school education or beyond

were classified as resilient. Additionally, in a study of Spanish-speaking parents in Los

Angeles, 48% of the respondents reported that their own educational level limited their

involvement in their child's education (Gutierrez, 2006). Moreover, Johnson (1970)

reported a study in which mothers of well-performing White students had significantly

more schooling than their Latino counterparts.

Collectively, Latino parents are unaware of the academic requirements for college

enrollment and the financial costs of college (Perez, 2000; Torrez, 2004). In a study by

Torrez, it was revealed that Latino parents were typically unaware that in order for them

to be effective advocates for their students, the parents needed academic and financial

resources. The undeveloped knowledge of the U.S. educational system serves to inhibit

the ability of Latino parents to advocate for their students' academic success (Cantrell,

2003). These Latino parents "do not know that the expectations of American schools are

different from the expectations of schools in their countries of origin or in their parents'

countries of origin" (Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1994, p. 103).

Zarate and Pachon (2006) reported that over 50% of Latino students who

participated in their study "thought students have to be U.S. citizens to apply for college

financial aid" and "few respondents could accurately estimate the cost of attending either

the University of California or the California State University" (p.1). If students have

such misperceptions, then their parents must surely possess them, as well (Perez, 2000).

Levine (1998) reported that in his study, Latino parents revealed disillusionment and demoralization with the U.S. school system because of disagreements with policies and procedures of the school. One example of a policy disagreement was described as the U.S. school policy to advance a student to the next grade level on the basis of age rather than on the basis of merit, as is done in school systems in Latin-American countries. The parents in this study believed this policy to be the root of additional problems in the school involving poor student behavior, lack of teacher respect, and mediocre learning motivation (Levine, 1998). The disillusionment and demoralization reported by parents was believed to be a cause of limited parental involvement in education and school-related functions. Similarly, the disconnect between native school systems and the U.S. school system, once realized, results in minimal motivation and no expectations of structural constraints being removed (Perez, 2000).

Language and communication. Communication and language are challenges that Latino parents commonly experience and that serve to inhibit their involvement in their children's education (Ceballo, 2004; Commins, 1992; Ferguson, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; Levine, 1998; Perez, 2000). Parents' broken English or non-use of the English language often thwarts their comfort level in communicating with educators and administrators (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Additionally, Perez (2000) found that Latino parents refrain from communicating with schools because of past negative experiences with teachers and counselors.

It is common for Latino parents to avoid parent-teacher conferences, meetings with school counselors and Back to School Night because of their low comfort levels that result from language challenges (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007). Not only do Latino parents typically hold cultural value assumptions that the educator is the authority in the educational environment, they also commonly feel uncomfortable communicating with educated individuals such as teachers, school administrators, and counselors. Low educational attainment and language disconnect often have the power to create fear of educational meetings for parents. Parents and educators should be made aware that, as stated by Phillips (1992), "there is a highly significant relationship between conference attendance and student achievement" (p. 20). In addition, Hiatt-Michael (2001b) stated, "Espinosa (1995) noted that Hispanic parents do not seem to respond to written material, such as flyers or newsletters, even if these are published in the parents' native language, until direct personal contact has been created" (p. 43). Therefore, when attempting to reach out to Latino parents, teachers should consider they might have more success with their efforts by attempting phone calls and/or home visits.

Ceballo (2004) and Valdivieso and Nicolau (1994) reported that low-income Latino parents in their respective studies displayed nonverbal support for their students. One student in the Ceballo study described her mother's communication behaviors: "She would just come by and hug me and say, 'Don't worry too hard, and go to bed.' So there was a positive support" (p. 180). Similarly, Huerta-Macias (1998) commented on the nature of Latino parent involvement as "doing tasks around the home, for example, family members provide guidance but do not generally give verbal explanations nor ask

questions of the kind that are typical in mainstream Anglo culture" (p. 32). In

communication between teachers and parents, Hiatt-Michael (2007) suggested, in order

for teachers to cross the language barrier, they should consider nonverbal cultural

communication: "A concerned look, outstretched hand, and relaxed body translate as

personal interest to a Hispanic family" (p. 5). The mere presence of Latino students at a

school or in a school district provides opportunity for teachers and administrators to

demonstrate behaviors and attitudes that reflect a positive disposition toward success for

Latino students, parents and families.

Cultural Construct

      Socioeconomic status (SES). According to English (2002), cultural capital

includes SES. As stated earlier, a family's socioeconomic status is a major factor in

determining the likelihood of college enrollment (Duany & Pittman, 1990). Likewise, the

socioeconomic status of Latino families can play a role in the ability of parents to be

involved in a child's education and college planning process. For example, low-income

families can experience hardships that hinder parental involvement due to the time and

energy required to handle multiple jobs (Griffith, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,

1995). In some cases, the students themselves are required to obtain employment to

increase the family income (Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Further, Perez and Salazar (1997)

stated, "There are a number of reasons why students drop out of school; however, SES

and other aspects of family background are those most consistently linked to dropping

out" (p. 54). Coffman (2001) found that the reasons for dropping out in the first place are

frequently related to family economics.

According to Martinez et al. (2004) and Calderon (2007), Latino parents have a significantly lower level of income than non-Latino parents. Similarly, Perez and Salazar (1997) contend that Latinos are "two-and-one-half times as likely as non-Latinos to live in poverty. As a result of their low SES, they tend to live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, limited opportunities, and few resources" (p. 59). The existence of poverty in a community is directly related to the prevalence of failing schools, gang crime, dropouts, and violence (Perez & Salazar, 1997; Wood, 2003). Latino students are most likely to attend schools with a high measure of poverty (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007).

Most low-income Latino parents want their children to succeed in school (Michael et al., 2007; Valdés, 1996; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1994). However, scarcity of expendable income limits Latino parents in providing their students educational resources (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992a; Gallagher, 2001) to which middle-class and upper-class students normally have access (e.g., computers, school supplies, and preparatory courses). Bouffard (2006) reported finding that, while Latino students benefited when their parents were technologically competent, Latino parents were less likely than parents of other cultures to have technological access for communication with educators and schools.

Perez (2000) reported that undeveloped knowledge of standardized tests and the cost of college is a challenge to parent involvement in the college preparation process. Similarly, when focusing on the impact of standardized tests on college admission, English (2002) expressed, "From their inception, standardized tests have consistently demonstrated that the children of the poor perform less well than their more affluent

counterparts" (p. 299). Williams (2003) reported finding that socioeconomic status is the strongest predictor of standardized test scores.

Low-income Latino parents are also limited by having little time and energy, (Griffith, 1998) as they typically work long and irregular hours (Garcia-Ramos, 2007). These work hours are likely to prevent a parent from the ability to attend evening school functions (McCollum, 1996; Olvera, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Latino parents with low levels of energy are not likely to offer educational assistance to their students. Lareau (as cited in Drummond & Stipek, 2004) reported that parents in low-income communities were less prepared to help their students with schoolwork at home, less informed about school-related issues, and less likely to attend school-related events.

Additionally, when parents are required to work multiple or non-traditional hour jobs, they are more likely to be in need of more energy and time to devote to monitoring their children's educational progress. When a student's education is not closely monitored by parents or caring adults then absenteeism, poor grades, and poor student citizenship can occur without any parent intervention to correct the problem. Both high levels of student absenteeism and low levels of student involvement in school activities are known to inhibit high academic performance (Anderson, 2004; McCarthy, 2000; Valladares, 2002). McCarthy reported that students whose parents are classified as lower socioeconomic status have higher absenteeism and lower student involvement in school activities.

Latino student achievement and college enrollment are affected by a family's socioeconomic status. When Latinos cannot afford a college education, the U.S. economy and job market are affected. In this regard, Valencia (1997) stated, "Improving the educational and socioeconomic conditions of Latinos is critical for the long-term well being and prosperity of the United States" (p. 3). Additionally, when Latinos cannot afford a college education, often face the challenge of cultural stereotyping which further oppresses their educational and social mobility. According to Barrera (1997), low socioeconomic status can lead to cultural disadvantage. By "cultural disadvantage" Barrera refers to the lack of material possessions, which leads to visual stereotyping by citizens of higher socioeconomic status.

Cultural disconnect. The undeveloped knowledge about the American school system can be attributed to cultural schemas. Latinos immigrated to the United States largely from Mexico or other Spanish-speaking countries where the educational systems differ from the American system (Moll & Ruiz, 2002). The educational system frameworks of Spanish-speaking countries have been passed down from generation to generation. This often slows the process of developing a true understanding of the American educational frameworks (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Levine, 1998; Valdés, 1996). "People not only bring their pasts with them, experiences that shape contemporary perspectives and a sense of who one is, but identity is continually reformed in each present-day encounter with family members, friends, and strangers alike" (Sparks, 2002, p. 69). Without a doubt, the Latino culture, particularly that of the Mexican American, is one where family plays a prominent role in transferring values, morals, and priorities

(Guerra, 1970). According to a study by Reese et al. (1995), Latino parents' involvement in their children's education is limited to actions in the moral realm, which are not typically actions recognized by educators as active involvement promoting academic performance. Similarly, Valdés (1996) reported that in her study, "*Consejos* were important because mothers considered *la educación de los hijos* (the moral education of their children) to be their primary responsibility" (p. 125).

Culturally, Latino families adhere largely to authoritative rule. Likewise, Latino parents naturally take a non-interventionist stance by not interfering in the curriculum and instruction selected by educators (Gibson, 1995; McCollum, 1996). According to Bhachu (1985), Latino parents often were raised with cultural mind-sets where the appropriate role of a concerned parent in the education of their children is *noninterventionist* in nature. Similarly, McCollum, expressed, "Parents from such backgrounds believe they should not intervene in the school's business or question the teacher's practices and expertise" (p. 2). For the most part, Latino parents believe that educators know what is best for the student in the school setting as the parent knows what is best for the child in the home environment (Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Latino parents often view the educator as the authority figure in the school setting and therefore feel that any involvement will be viewed by the educator as an intrusion (Commins, 1992; Ho, Fox, & Gonzalez, 2007). Mexican American parents hold the belief that educating students is the sole responsibility of the school (Jacobson, 2005).

Educators who have the impression that Latino parents do not care about their children's education will likely treat the parents and students accordingly (Ebby-Rosin,

2005; Torrez, 2004; Valdés, 1996). A self-fulfilling prophecy exists when educators

continue the cycle by taking the authoritative stance and do not welcome or solicit parent

involvement (Carter, 1974; Darder, 1997). According to Lott (as cited in Ceballo, 2004)

many educators maintain negative stereotypes of parents based on socioeconomic status,

often stigmatizing these parents. When stereotypes are present that impede action toward

soliciting parent involvement, it is possible that hope may be lost for future high student

academic achievement. Conversely, Gonzalez (1998) found that when a student's

positive achievement in school is apparent, the parent's satisfaction will encourage a

better parent-educator relationship, thus enhancing Latino parent involvement.

Moreover, while the composition of the student population of California and of

the United States as a whole is quickly becoming more Latino, the face of the nation's

population of educators remains predominantly White. Moll and Ruiz, (2002) reported,

"Thus, Latinos constitute the majority of students…statewide, and they are largely

working-class and poor, but the teaching corps is primarily white and middle-class – and

English monolingual as well" (p. 366). The California Department of Education reported

that in the 2006-2007 school year, San Bernardino County schools employed 3,078

Latino teachers and 14,329 White teachers; 263 Latino administrators and 1,162 White

administrators; and 200 Latino counselors and 979 White counselors. Additionally, in the

same school year Riverside County schools employed 3,038 Latino teachers and 14,262

White teachers; 258 Latino administrators and 1,113 White administrators; and 204

Latino counselors and 997 White counselors. These contrasts increase the likelihood of

culture clashes in schools and possible misalignment between teacher, student, and parent

(Calderon, 1997; Hiatt-Michael, 2007). Figure 2 illustrates a possible disconnect between

teachers, parents, and students in communities where culture clash is likely.
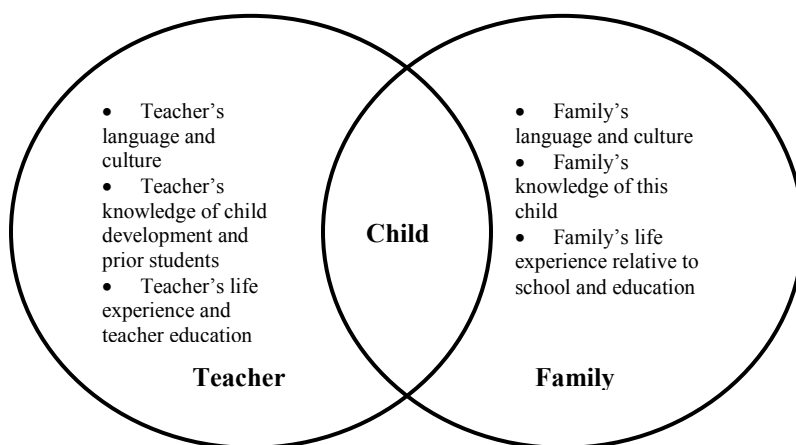
Figure 2. Funds of knowledge. From *Practices for Family Involvement in Schooling across the Continents* by D. B. Hiatt-Michael, 2005, Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publications. Reprinted with the permission of the author.

Similarly, Levine (1998) asserted, "At school, communication between parent and school

depends heavily on the teachers' Spanish skills or the availability of translation" (p. 48).

Campbell (2000) suggested that teachers should "involve parents in meaningful ways.

Find out how to get parents to school if they are not already coming to the site. Provide

translation" (p. 292). In addition to language, knowledge of cultural values and morals

will aid an educator in effectively communicating with Latino parents and students.

Even when educators reach out to encourage parental involvement, educators may

lack cultural understanding to employ conventional methods of involving Latino parents

in the education of their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Hiatt-Michael & Purrington,

2007). In reference to a cultural disconnect between teachers and Latino parents, Hiatt-

Michael and Purrington (2007) stated, "Differences in culture, language, prior

educational experiences, and time constraints present obstacles" (p. 53). Obstacles or "challenges" often present in the forms of language disconnect, negative teacher disposition, and unavailability of both teachers and parents for meetings and regularly scheduled communication. These cultural challenges can be overcome through efforts from teachers and parents to form partnerships, work together, and by accessing funds of knowledge.

Furthermore, some Latino families still hold onto traditional cultural values that can often be considered a cultural conflict. "Latinos tend to think in 'us/our' rather than 'I' terms. Therefore, traditional Latino families often sacrifice their personal goals to enhance the welfare of their family" (Perez & Pinzon, 1997, p. 182). Oftentimes, this means that students will put their educational goals on hold for the sake of contributing financially and emotionally to the family welfare.

Similarly, Nunez and Carroll (1998) suggested that lack of parental involvement in high school education is largely due to cultural conflicts and the fact that the student is needed to work and contribute to the family income, which can also be taxing on the student's time and energy. Zarate and Pachon (2006) reported that for Latino student respondents in their study, the opportunity costs associated with going to college were not being able to work and incurring debt.

Finally, Huber et al. (2006) and Gonzalez, Ho, and Fox (2007) suggest that cultural deficit frameworks blame families and parents for poor academic performance of minority youth, as opposed to looking at the social and cultural barriers experienced by these parents and families in a positive light. "Deficit thinking takes the position that

minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). However, the five tenets of critical race theory provide an alternative view using cultural factors as a positive contributor to parents and minority youth and as leverage for successful progress in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Delgado-Gaitan (2004) holds that "Latino parents already value school, and that is a critical advantage for educators to acknowledge and use as a springboard" (p. 7). Gonzalez and Moll (2002) suggested that teachers act as researchers by entering the homes of these Latino families and accessing the funds of knowledge: a cultural artifact that teachers can embrace to help facilitate their teachings (see Figure 2). Hiatt-Michael (2007) recommended that teachers access funds of knowledge: "regularly invite parent opinion, solicit their input and feedback, ask parents how they are doing, and request whether or not their child is getting what he/she needs from school" (p. 4).

Committed Action for Overcoming Barriers to Latino Parent Involvement

In order for change to occur in the levels of Latino parent involvement in education, the general consensus revealed in the literature is that all educators and other stakeholders must take committed action. In this regard, Hurtado and Garcia (1997) stated, "There is an urgent need for productive action to alleviate the problem of Latino under-representation in higher education" (p. 7). "As educators we need to realize the powerful impact that parents can have on children and on their education" (Quezada et al., 2003, p. 38). Aligning committed action with the concerns of student achievement

and parental involvement will make achievement opportunities available to Latino students.

Paull and Hughes (2005) stated, "To be effective, we must choose to be personally responsible about a specific concern or concerns, take appropriate committed action as individuals or as individuals in concert with others" (p. 1). According to Gandara (2006), "Providing frank information to both students and parents" is an effective method for addressing the concerns of educational achievement and involvement" (p. 1). Midgley (2005) feels that judgments and criticisms of cultures and societies outside of our own are driving forces of action.

Latino parents have a responsibility and the power to ensure that schools and educators are delivering a high-quality education to their children (Ebby-Rosin, 2005). It is crucial that schools and educational outreach programs communicate to Latino parents that they have a responsibility and an opportunity, as members of their communities, to demonstrate involvement in the education of their children (Gandara, 2006; Hiatt-Michael & Purrington, 2007). However, a study by Martinez et al. (2004) revealed that Latino students do not trust their parents enough to approach them for educational assistance. Thus, a responsibility remains to transform Latino parents into a trusted educational resource for their children.

Trevizu (2001) reported a study where Latino parents were actively engaged in a six-week training program using a psycho-educational approach. Results indicated that the program was successful and useful for parents in orienting them to the necessity of involvement in their children's education. Parents participating in programs designed to

advance their involvement in the education of their children have the opportunity to

network and communicate the same involvement fundamentals to their family, friends

and other people in their communities. As parents facing social injustice, they have a

responsibility to the greater good. Mill (2005), spoke of the greater good as utilitarianism,

the pursuit of happiness and avoidance of pain, which is transcendent in nature and

involves the sacrifice of one's immediate happiness for the happiness of the whole. Thus,

there is a need for Latino parents to demonstrate more committed action set into motion

than currently displayed in order to stimulate social change in the educational

achievement levels of their children (Quezada et al., 2003) for the good of society and of

the nation.

Moreover, teachers and administrators have a shared interest in Latino parent

involvement and a responsibility to act upon this interest. As Lightfoot (1978) avers,

> It is important to recognize that the presence of parents in the school not only
> provides more adults to teach reading or offer help and support to the children but
> also transforms the culture of the school…It feels like home. (p. 173)

Educators and other school personnel must connect with parents and communities to

foster involvement (Quezada et al., 2003). In doing so, educators and other school

personnel should understand that Latino parents will actively participate when the

environment is welcoming, respectful, friendly, and inclusive (Allen-Jones, 2004; Hiatt-

Michael & Purrington, 2007; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1994). To this end, Huerta-Macias

(1998) suggested that policymakers and educators plan and implement the following

activities: "Invitations to informal 'café y pan dulce' (equivalent to "dessert and coffee")

gatherings before school, phone calls, home visits, and after-school conversations in the

school yard with parents who pick up their children" (p. 42). Rolon (2005), expressed the

idea that in order for an educational outreach program to be productive, the program

should "maintain a significant number of bilingual administrative and professional

staff…organize meetings with Latino parents to discuss school issues relevant to them,

and increase the number of Latino parents on the school advisory committees and PTA"

(p. 33).

Institutions of higher education can also play a critical role by not waiting for, or

merely hoping that, students will seek them out. Rather, these institutions should

implement effective outreach efforts in the Latino communities (Reed, 2006).

Programs and Resources to Foster Latino Parent Involvement

Committed action on the part of administrators, educators, and policymakers is

necessary to form partnerships with Latino parents (Garcia-Ramos, 2007).

Administrators, educators, and policymakers must consider initiating relationships by

implementing culturally-sensitive outreach programs that will encourage Latino parents

to be involved in their students' education (Armenta, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan, 2006;

Gonzalez et al., 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2005; Perez & Pinzon, 1997). Gonzalez et al.

suggest that, "Culturally-sensitive parent education programs typically include activities

and workshops in which families have the opportunity to share experiences as well as

learn new skills to partner with their child's teacher" (p. 88). Epstein (1990) argues that,

"There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. The

main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in

later life" (p. 101). Garcia-Ramos (2007) asserted, "Parents' voice into the construction

of a community profile adds further validity to the profile. It becomes one that has value

for teachers and parents alike" (p. 37). In this regard, a school, family, and community

partnership effort by one predominantly Latino-populated school in Los Angeles County

produced favorable results for involving parents. From this partnership, Hiatt-Michael,

Goldman & Heredia (2007) reported, "Parents' responses reflected the themes of

optimism, gratitude, and confidence. One parent elaborated,…'I also learned that it is not

true that because we are Hispanic we can not help our kids'" (p. 27).

Programs that are implemented should accommodate the hardships experienced

by Latino parents and serve to establish a checks-and-balance system for accountability

purposes. According to Armenta (1993), a significant factor to consider is that Latino

parents report low levels of awareness of outreach and educational programs. Ceballo

(2004) stated, "Social programs that address teachers' misguided perceptions about poor

parents are needed to accommodate changes in school policies for fostering greater

parent-school cooperation" (p. 183). "Implementing parent involvement activities for

Latino parents in the schools requires a systematic approach that coordinates time, place,

and communication to facilitate Latino parents' attendance" (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, p.

108). The literature describes educational acts and programs from federal, state, local and

private institutions that have emerged in response to the need for Latino parent

involvement in the education of Latino students. Some of these programs are discussed

below.

Home teacher act. The Home Teacher Act was enacted by the Commission of

Immigration and Housing Act established in 1913. California was the first to recognize

the mother as an integral part of a child's success in education, particularly mothers of

immigrant status. Will C. Wood (as cited in Gonzalez, 1990) stated that teacher visits to

the home began in the Los Angeles area because

> She is a foreign mother. If her child is doing well in school so much the better. It
> is still important that she learn English, have contact with American life and
> create for the child a home which will not be in conflict with his American
> education. (pp. 52-53)

The Home Teacher Act was one of the first steps in U.S. history to address the need for

parent involvement in the education of Latino children.

PIQE. The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) is a program based in

San Diego, California and designed to empower parents. The program was founded in

1987 and based on the recognition of a strong need for parent involvement. According to

Nealy (2007),

> PIQE is a nine-week training program for parents with students in grades K-12.
> During weekly classes, parents learn how to improve their children's performance
> in the classroom, enhance their parent-child relationship, and map out a strategic
> plan to get their children enrolled in a college or university. (p. 27)

PIQE makes concerted efforts to accommodate its participants' schedules and is

delivered in more than 15 languages (Chandler, 2006; Valladolid, 2006). Further, a

performance evaluation report of this program reported that PIQE is successfully making

a positive difference in reducing dropout rates, increasing college enrollment (Vidano &

Sahafi, 2004), and informing parents about what to ask the counselor and how to

calculate a grade point average (Gonzalez et al., 2007; Miller, 2007). According to

Vidano and Sahafi, the students whose parents participated in PIQE experienced a 7%

dropout rate from high school, a 79.2% college bound rate, and a 19% admission rate to a

four-year college. These were all better statistics than those of the Latino student

population in San Diego. Rivero (2006) reported that PIQE parents reported shifting from

the *non-interventionist* stance to being more assertive and contacting their child's school

for information about academic progress. In 2006, 20 schools in the Inland Empire

delivered the PIQE program to parents (PIQE, 2009). Also, Nealy (2007) reported that in

2006, PIQE graduated 27,815 low-income parents in California.

California parent center. This center recognizes the need for parent involvement

in education and the college preparation process. It offers programs designed to assist

parents to communicate with schools and community partnerships. The center works in

conjunction with researcher Joyce Epstein and the California Department of Education in

an effort to bring together parents, schools, and communities (California Parent Center,

2009).

Epstein's (2001) six types of family involvement provide a framework for the

work of the California Parent Center. The end goal in applying the Epstein model is to

"promote shared responsibility for the education of the child among home, school, and

community" (Ferguson, 2007, p. 22).

Parent assisted reading training. The Parent Assisted Reading Training

(P.A.R.T.) program was implemented in 1999 at Franklin Elementary School in the

Redlands Unified School District, a district in the Inland Empire. "Educators at Franklin

felt a need to help Latino families and their children to be better prepared academically at

the start of kindergarten, and to have families feel a stronger connection between the

home and the school" (Quezada et al., 2003, p. 33). This program actively strives to

involve Latino parents in the education and college preparation process of their children.

The means by which a high level of involvement is achieved includes communication

with educators, academic assistance techniques with the child and educational awareness.

No child left behind. Public schools in the United States must adhere to Federal

laws. In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was established. According to the

provisions of NCLB, effective implementation of the law is dependent on each individual

school being held accountable for applying strategies to solicit effective parent

participation and empowering parents to make informed choices for their children's

education options (Gonzalez & Lazarin, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2008). On paper, the No

Child Left Behind states that it is dedicated to school improvement and increased student

achievement, and that it recognizes parent involvement as a strong factor to accomplish

these goals. Section 1118 of the NCLB act designates provisions involving parent

involvement. This section of the law focuses on provisions that are designed to build

programs and structures that will actively involve parents and families in their children's

education (Epstein, 2005). Epstein wrote,

> NCLB requires states, districts, and schools to develop and implement policies
> and plans to reach all families. Every school that receives Title I funds must
> implement a program to involve all parents in ways that support students'
> achievement and success in school. (p. 179)

In addition, the law specifies requirements that all communication and efforts to involve

parents and families must be "clear, useful and in languages that all parents can

understand" (p. 180).

The U.S. Department of Education provides funding for Parental Information and

Resources Centers (PIRCs) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These

PIRCs receive funds to help education agencies implement the NCLB's parent-

involvement mandates (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). However, the premise of

NCLB is unidirectional. The law operates from a top-down framework where mandates

are passed down from the government to the school administration to teachers to parents.

Conversely, Moll's concept of local funds of knowledge offers a circular approach to

involving parents in the education process of their children (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002;

Moll & Ruiz, 2002). In this approach, funds of knowledge from both teachers and

families interact in the school-home relationship (Ferguson, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2007).

White House initiative on educational excellence for Hispanic Americans. The

United States government has recognized the fastest growing ethnic group in the country

and the need for talent and educated citizens in this ethnic group to contribute positively

to society. President George W. Bush appointed Adam Chavarria as the Director of the

White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. This initiative

produced the U.S. Department of Education *Tool Kit for Hispanic Families*, a booklet in

both English and Spanish directed at Latino parents and increasing their involvement in

their children's education.

Perez and Pinzon (1997) suggest, "Developing family involvement activities

which are culturally sensitive, bilingual in nature, and more than literal translations from

the English text provides another strategy to facilitate communication between parents

and schools" (p. 184). Similarly, Armenta (1993) reported finding that, based on

information gathered from Latino parents, successful outreach and involvement efforts for Latino parents should include bilingual programs held at local schools, colleges, and community centers, and that these programs should be held during flexible hours for 30-60 minutes per session. Lucas, Henze and Donato (1997) reported schools are developing Parent Advisory Committees to especially reach out for increased parent involvement of "language minority" students who have limited English proficiency (p. 391).

Gutierrez (2006) found that more than half of Latino parents in her study indicated school programs were only sometimes offered at convenient times for them to attend. Additionally, she found that attendance incentives and highly qualified instructors enhance parent involvement outcomes for this ethnic group. "Parents will participate at a Center where a welcoming, respectful, friendly and inclusive environment exists" (Allen-Jones, 2004).

Working for change. The faith–based community organizing group, *Working for Change*, that was studied by Ebby-Rosin (2005) recruits Latino parents as partners in its effort to ensure a high quality education for their children. This community organization holds the belief that parents have an essential role in ensuring that schools fulfill their responsibilities to the Latino student population. Additionally, this organization serves as a much-needed liaison between parents and schools.

Path to college. The Path to College is another educational non-profit organization with the mission to serve its community by providing Latino students with skills and knowledge that will increase academic achievement and college enrollment rates (T. Rivera, personal communication, August 8, 2007). This organization targets

high-school-aged Latino students in Southern California. It is reported that 99% of

program participants graduate from high school and 90% attend college (T. Rivera,

personal communication, August 8, 2007). The program operates under a framework of

social capital theory by providing mentors who act as *parents in abstentia (parents in*

absence) for students in addition to encouraging parents to participate in their children's

education and college preparation process. In a recent study, Olivo (2009) found that

alumni of the program reported the most influential contributor to their success was the

social capital from adults and peer mentors they encountered while in the program.

Further, the program reports recognizing the importance of Latino parent involvement by

hosting annual parent involvement workshops and providing a 24-page document titled

Get Involved! A Family and Parent Guide (Heredia, 2007) to parents of all student

participants.

       Hispanas organized for political equality. The Hispanas Organized for Political

Equality (HOPE) program is organized to offer services for Latino students in California

to stay in the K-12 educational pipeline and to continue to college. This program focuses

its services on Latino females. Additionally, this is yet another program operating under a

framework of social capital. Role models and mentors play a significant part in the

success and operations of this organization. Horwedel, (2007) interviewed four

participants of the program and reported that "all four women recognize the value of role

models and mentorship" (p. 13).

       Latino educational attainment initiative. The Latino Educational Attainment

Initiative was established in Orange County in Southern California. Also recognizing the

demand for Latino parent involvement, hosting a series of parent focus groups was one of the first activities implemented in this initiative (Habermehl, 2006). As a result of the parent focus groups, *Ten Education Commandments for Parents Facilitator's Guide* was created as a "tool that encourages and supports parental involvement, improves parent knowledge of the educational system, and united parents, schools and teachers as one team" (Habermehl, 2006, p. 25).

Summary

An achievement gap exists between Latino students and non-Latino students in schools throughout the nation. Latino students continue to demonstrate high rates of dropouts through the educational pipeline. The high dropout rates and poor academic achievement levels of Latino students do not fare well for Latino communities or the United States as a whole, especially because Latinos have a large presence in this country and are predicted to continue to grow as an ethnic group. According to Williams (2003), "Efforts must be made to reduce the inequities and unfairness that have been perpetrated upon those students and to close the largely manufactured achievement gap in America's schools" (p. 8). Therefore, active efforts to improve academic achievement and dropout rates of Latino students continue to be a concern for policymakers and educators. One focus is on the parents of Latino students, and their involvement in the education and college preparation of their children.

The research literature on parent involvement supports the notion that parent involvement in the education of students has a positive impact on the students' academic achievement. Students also hold a large part of the responsibility for their achievement in

school. Educators and parents share some of the accountability for a student's

achievement. According to Epstein (1995), "When parents, teachers, students and others

view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and

begins its work" (p. 702).

While the literature reviewed in the chapter above reflects the views of students

and educators for the most part, the perspective of the Latino parent must also be

sufficiently considered in the literature. The following chapter will outline the methods

used for this study in an effort to gather data from a Latino parent perspective about

involvement in education and the college preparation process of Latino students.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

Introduction

The review of the literature in the previous chapter reveals that while Latino

parents place a high value on education (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Hiatt-Michael, 2007,

Valdés, 1996) for their children, they do not have the means to impact their children's

educational outcomes. It is reported that, collectively, Latino parents have not developed

knowledge of the U.S. educational system, take a non-interventionist position, experience

communication barriers with educators, and typically experience financial hardships

(Habermehl, 2006; Valdés, 1996). Financial hardships have been found to hinder student

achievement due to parents' need to hold multiple jobs (Ceballo, 2004), which often

results in parents lacking the time and energy needed to be actively involved in their

children's education (Griffith, 1998).

Research has revealed that parent involvement in the education of their children

can positively impact a child's academic performance. While research reflects the

perceptions of parent involvement from the students' and educators' points of view, the

research literature, for the most part, is limited in the point of view of the Latino parent.

Overall, there is insufficient research on what Latino parents perceive as social

challenges in supporting their children and demonstrating involvement in their children's

secondary education and college preparation process. In addition, insufficient research

exists in the area of Latino parents' perceptions of the impact of such culturally related

issues as immigration, race, skin color, language, family history, and education level on their involvement.

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to explore Latino parents' perceptions of their involvement in their students' education and pursuit of higher education, a perception that is underrepresented in the literature in this subject area. Insight about Latino parent perceptions is essential for students and their educators.

To achieve this purpose, a mixed method study was designed. In this descriptive exploratory study, archival data and qualitative data gathered from parent focus groups were examined for perspectives of Latino parents. The intent of this study was to provide a contribution to the body of work already done in the area of parental involvement in education and to provide insight to the social and cultural factors that inhibit and facilitate Latino parent involvement in the education of their children. Qualitative methods were also used in order to gather in-depth narratives for a broad understanding of the Latino parent perspective. Quantitative methods alone would not have adequately ensured such meaningful depth in the data collected.

Additionally, qualitative research methods were employed for this study to enable the researcher to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the social and individual human issue of parent involvement in education through the perspectives of the respondents (Creswell, 2003). "In qualitative research in an inquiry process of understanding…The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural

settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the

meanings people bring to them" (p. 5). Also, according to Goodman, Schlossberg &

Anderson (2006), when respondents are afforded the opportunity to tell personal stories,

the researcher is using an effective method of assessing needs the of the respondents.

Design of the Study

Using mixed methods, this research employed a modified grounded theory design

in an effort to understand the perspectives of Latino parent respondents through their own

frames of reference. Grounded theory originated from the collaborative work of Barney

Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their study of medical sociology (Babbie, 2004; Pidgeon,

1996). Babbie described grounded theory as an "attempt to derive theories from an

analysis of the patterns, themes, and common categories discovered in observational

data" (p. 291). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative research of this type

involves coding and theoretical sampling where open coding involves identifying,

labeling, categorizing, and describing phenomena that emerge from data and where

theoretical sampling involves non-statistical sampling methods. In theoretical sampling,

"groups or institutions are selected on the basis of their theoretical relevance" (Babbie,

2004, p. 292). Additionally, grounded theory compares categories, topics, or themes that

emerge against data to form a theoretical framework. The methical approach of

grounded theory stresses the importance of following processes, describing, and coding

everything that is changing or occurring in a research setting. In grounded theory

research, face-to-face interviews and observations of small groups or social situations are

typical (Psathas & ten Have, 1994).

Through a mixed method approach, this study: (a) examined and conducted a descriptive analysis of archival data; (b) identified a sample of 40 respondents from the study population of respondents who completed a questionnaire (*N*=132) for the Path to College organization; (c) contacted the prospective respondents via telephone using the Introductory Conversation with Respondents script (see Appendix A) to request their participation in this study and to schedule the day, location and time for a focus group interview; and (d) conducted focus group interviews with 23 respondents to collect narrative data. The 23 respondents participated in one of five different focus groups held during May and June, 2008.

Secondary data came from Path to College archival data. The primary data set used for documentation of this study included a review of the literature and semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher obtained written authorization from the Director of the Board of the Path to College organization to use archival data from the organization for this study (see Appendix B).

The semi-structured group-interview questions were inspired by a review of the literature and designed to elicit appropriate information and data about Latino parent perspectives about their involvement in their children's education. It was intended that the focus group interviews provide information missing from the review of literature so that policymakers, educators, and outreach programs may have sufficient access to the perspectives of Latino parents about their own involvement in the education of their children.

Archival Data

Data for this study were gathered from questionnaires which are classified as archival data and that were completed by parents of the Path to College organization (see Appendix C). Archival data "are those that are present in existing records, or archives" and are examined by the researcher (McBurney, 1998, p. 136). One hundred thirty-two Latino parents of ninth- and tenth-grade students completed questionnaires in the summer of 2007. McBurney asserts that, "In order for archival data to be scientifically useful, the agency collecting the data must ask questions similar to the scientist's or must inadvertently collect data that are of value to the scientist" (p. 136). Such was the case with the Path to College questionnaire. Responses to the questions asked in that survey were very relevant to the research questions of this study. Additionally, each questionnaire had a section for contact information of each parent participant to be used for a possible follow-up interview. Parents were asked to provide their telephone number if they agreed to be contacted for a follow-up study.

The instrument used to collect the archival data was a questionnaire that included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and described the directions for completing the questions. The questionnaire consisted of 12 demographic questions, 13 questions that called for responses based on a Likert scale, six open-ended questions and three yes/no questions. The questionnaire began with a section for demographic information. The requested demographic information included the following; ethnicity with which the parent most identified, date of birth, marital status, family income level, family household size, student grade point average, computer ownership, parent work

schedule and job type, number of jobs held by parent, and primary language spoken by the parent in the home.

Organization Description

The Path to College organization was selected as a source for data because the researcher had broad access to archival data and personnel that would be useful for conducting this study. The name of the organization has been fictionalized for this study in order to assure confidentiality of all respondents. Path to College is an educational non-profit (501C-3) organization based in Southern California. The organization's mission is to increase the Latino student high school graduation rate in Southern California, as well as to increase the college enrollment and college graduation rates of those Latino students. The program targets high-school aged Latino students. These students attend both public and private schools. The organization promotes higher education, leadership, community involvement and cultural awareness. For the past 24 years, Path to College has hosted a six-day summer conference and has held several workshops throughout the years for high school students, their parents, program alumni, and returning staff. Additionally, the entire organization and all of its endeavors are funded by donations and major sponsorships.

Criteria for participation in the organization include the following: (a) be a student exiting the eighth or ninth grade; (b) have demonstrated academic or leadership potential; (c) have at least a 2.8 GPA.

Population of Study

In 2005-2006 in the Inland Empire, there were 11,434 high school dropouts. Of

those, 58% (6,601) were Latino. Additionally, in that school year, there were 18,149

Latino students who graduated in the Inland Empire. Of those graduates, 21% (3,887)

graduated with the required courses for UC/CSU enrollment. These data can be compared

to 48.2% (731) of Asian graduates and 30.5% (4,807) of White graduates who graduated

with required courses for UC/CSU admission (California Department of Education,

2005-2006). An obvious achievement gap exists among ethnic groups in the Inland

Empire.

Sampling Design

The target sample for the current study was taken from the Latino parent

population of the Inland Empire in Southern California. Twenty-three parents of ninth-

and tenth-grade Latino high school students were selected to participate. The parents

were a *purposeful* sample from the population of 132 parents who completed a

questionnaire classified as archival data as described above. A purposeful sample is

typically preferable to a random sample and is one "selected nonrandomly but for some

particular reason" (McBurney, 1998, p. 160). The purposeful sample was selected by

criterion sampling methods by accessing contact information that was provided on each

questionnaire. Criterion sampling methods are used to "study all cases that meet some

predetermined criterion of importance" (Isaac & Michael, 1995, p. 224). In order to be

eligible to participate in this study, respondents met the following criteria: (a) parent, (b)

Latino, (c) have a child who participated in the Path to College organization, and (d)

completed a questionnaire for the Path to College organization in the summer of 2007.

Eleven questionnaires were without a telephone number listed and were omitted

from the selection process. All telephone numbers provided on the questionnaires were

input into a database and assigned a number (1-121). The number for each questionnaire

was put into a hat and 40 numbers were randomly selected from that hat. The researcher

selected numbers from the hat in the presence of one doctoral student who assisted the

researcher with logging the selection results. The researcher then contacted by telephone

all 40 parents selected in order to request their participation in a focus group interview.

Parents were asked to participate and were informed that food and drinks would be

provided by the researcher at the time of the focus group. Of the 40 parents contacted by

telephone, 32 agreed to participate. Upon agreement to participate, the researcher offered

an option of five dates, times and locations of the scheduled focus groups from which

parents could choose. Finally, of the 32 parents who agreed to participate during the

telephone conversation with the researcher, 23 appeared at the scheduled focus groups

and participated in this study. While some parents appeared at the focus group along with

a spouse, only input from one parent from each family was included in this study.

Additionally, it is worth noting that some parent participants traveled distances that were

more than one hour's drive, up to 70 miles away to attend the focus group.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, face-to-face, audio-recorded focus groups discussions, which

varied in duration from 60 to 80 minutes, were the primary data collection method. The

focus groups were guided by nine open-ended questions (see Appendix D). Semi-

structured focus groups were conducted in order to gather in-depth understandings of

parent perceptions. According to Isaac and Michael (1995), this method is "built around a core of structured questions from which the interviewer branches off to explore in depth" (p. 145). Face-to-face focus groups allow the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondents and conduct observations during the interview (McBurney, 1998). Additionally, digital audio-recordings were utilized during the process as a means for recording dialogue and responses and for coding purposes (Silverman, 2003). Digital audio-recorders were not turned on until after the respondents had signed the focus group informed consent forms (see Appendix E) and completed a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F). Additionally, participants were assigned a number at the beginning of the session and were instructed to identify themselves during the session by their number only and to refrain from using their name.

All responses during focus groups were stated either in English or Spanish, according to the respondents' language of preference. A Spanish interpreter was present at all focus groups where Spanish-speaking respondents were in attendance. The reason for the presence of an interpreter was to translate for the researcher and for non-Spanish speakers in the room. During the focus groups, the researcher recorded observed behavior, body language, and tone when possible. These notations were useful for analysis of emotion, significance and for probing when necessary (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher also made handwritten notations in order to capture potential themes and ideas for analysis purposes. All focus groups were conducted within a four-week period in May and June, 2008.

Interview Procedures

The group interviews were held in various locations, depending upon the desire of the respondents, such as a local community room or school classroom. Prior to each group interview, the informed consent form was distributed and discussed in detail and confidentiality was assured. *Focus Group Informed Consent* forms were provided to each participant. Additionally, the participants were reminded that participation was strictly voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time.

Further, respondents were informed that the interview would be audio-recorded in order to ensure accuracy in capturing their words and thoughts. Respondents were informed that they could request that the audio recorder be turned off at any time to ensure their comfort in speaking freely about personal experiences or perspectives. The goal for the group interview sessions was that they last from 60-80 minutes each, depending upon the degree of elaboration and clarifying questions. However, the pace of interviews was driven by the collaboration between the researcher and respondents.

The respondents were asked semi-structured open-ended questions during the group interview sessions regarding their involvement in their children's education. Focus groups were guided by the researcher. A scribe was also present at each focus group to take accurate notes during the discussions. If a respondent was unclear about the meaning of a particular question, a brief clarification was given and the researcher provided verbal and non-verbal prompts to elicit additional information from a respondent, if needed. The role of the researcher was to make the respondents feel comfortable enough to freely express their thoughts and perspectives in response to questions or discussion amongst

the group (Neuman, 2003).

Pilot Study

Prior to collection of data for this study, the instrument used to guide focus group discussions and to elicit data was approved by a panel of experts (see Appendix G) in order to secure validity of the research data. The panel of experts was issued a letter in March, 2008 soliciting recommendations for changes to the interview instrument (see Appendix H). Expert panel members were asked to comment on their understanding of the proposed focus group questions and whether or not they believed the questions would elicit data to address the research questions for this study. They were also asked to indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that they believed would make the questions clearer to the respondents. All comments (see Appendix I) were returned to the researcher in April, 2008.

The interview questions were then used in a pilot study. They were presented to a group of six Latino parents in a pilot focus group on Sunday, April 13, 2008 in Southern California. The pilot focus group lasted 40 minutes. Participants were parents of high school students who participated in the Path to College program in 2005 or 2006. During the pilot, the researcher focused on identifying questions on the research instrument that might be confusing, misleading, or ambiguous so that alterations and clarification could be made, if necessary. Participants in the pilot study were not included in the remainder of the research and were ineligible to participate in the focus groups for this study.

Description of the Interview Setting

Group interviews were conducted in person, at a local neutral facility in the

respondents' community. This naturalistic approach was used because, as suggested by

Isaac and Michael (1995), "human behavior is best understood in its real-world context"

and natural environment (p. 219).

Protection of Human Subjects

The data collection methods of this study have potential to impact the study

respondents by stimulating awareness of the importance of parent involvement and

perceptions toward education. The impact of this study had limited potential to harm any

subjects physically or emotionally. Besides the imposition of time, there were no obvious

risks to participating in this study. All subjects were adults above the age of 18. In

addition, all procedures of this study were in accordance with regulations established by

the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University Graduate School of

Education and Psychology. This study also complied with the U.S. Code of Federal

Regulations, DHHS (CFR), Title 45 Part 46 (45 CFR 46), titled "Protection of Human

Subjects" and Parts 16 and 160. A completed application outlining all research

procedures for this study was submitted to the Pepperdine IRB for approval and a letter

of approval was issued on May 5, 2008.

The respondents in this study agreed to participate on a voluntary basis. Any

information that could have been potentially harmful to respondents or the researcher was

avoided. Moreover, all data collected was treated in confidence and with the highest

ethical standards. Interview transcripts that were not intended to be published as part of

this study were kept in a locked file cabinet until the completion of the study and were

destroyed upon the conclusion of the study.

Chapter Four:

Analysis and Findings

Introduction

This study explored Latino parents' perceptions of their involvement in their

children's education and college preparation process. To achieve the purpose of this

study, data was collected from archival data and from parent focus groups. This chapter

presents the study's analysis and findings in four sections. The first section is the analysis

of archival data, the questionnaires completed by 132 parents from the Path to College

program. Analysis of demographic questionnaires collected from the purposeful sample

is presented in the second section of this chapter. Analysis of data and thematic findings

from focus group interviews is presented in the third section of this chapter. Finally, the

fourth section is a summary of findings organized by the research questions of this study.

Analysis of Archival Data

In the summer of 2007, the Path to College organization surveyed 132 of its

Latino parents. The parents who completed the questionnaire had students who were

enrolled in a public or private school in Southern California and who had participated in

the Path to College organization. One questionnaire was completed per family. The

questionnaires were available to parents in either English or Spanish. Questionnaires

asked for demographic information and parent perceptions relating to parent involvement

in education and the college preparation process, which made the data useful for this

study. Responses were analyzed and are presented using descriptive statistics.

The demographic information of the parent population indicated that the majority of respondents were married, with 47% of those who chose to report household income reporting earning below $50,000 per year. Fifty percent of respondents reported having two individuals contributing to the annual household income while 48% reported having one individual contributing to the annual household income. Further, a majority (86%) of respondents reported holding one job at the time the questionnaire was administered.

The respondents to the Path to College questionnaire were asked for their age. They ranged in age from 29 to 58 years in 2007, at the time of the administration of the questionnaire. The average age of respondents was 43.5 years of age.

Completed questionnaires illustrated that 78% of respondents were married, while 8% were single, 8% were divorced, and 1% were separated. Five percent of respondents chose not to disclose their marital status (See Figure 3).
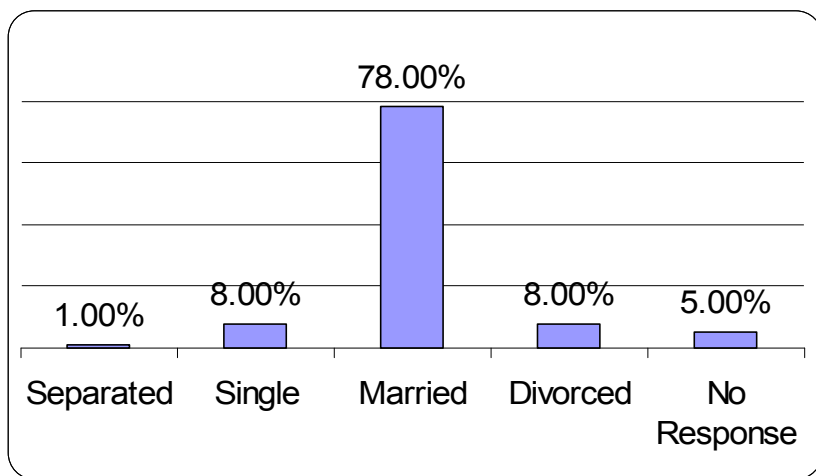
Figure 3. Marital status of parent population (*N*=132).

The majority (53%) of respondents reported English as the primary language spoken in their home, while 41% of respondents reported Spanish as the primary

language spoken in their home. Five percent of parents reported both English and Spanish

as the primary languages spoken in their home.
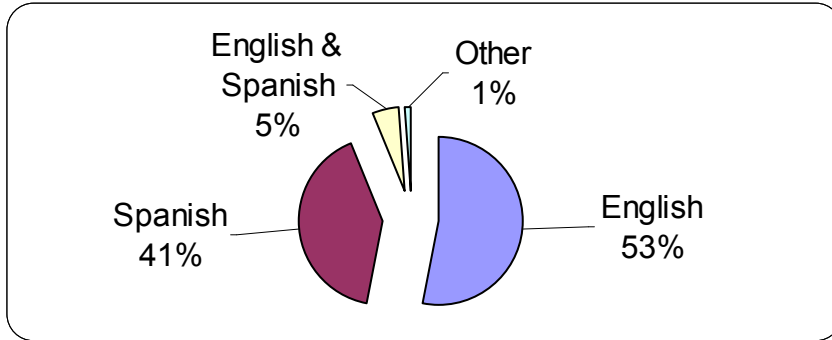
Figure 4. Primary language spoken in the home (*N*=132).

Additionally, as illustrated in Figure 5 94% of English-speaking respondents, 78%

of Spanish-speaking respondents and 100% of respondents who declared speaking both

English and Spanish reported feeling comfortable questioning their child's educators

when something is not right. Three percent of English-speaking respondents and 13% of

Spanish-speaking respondents contented not feeling comfortable questioning their child's

educators when something is not right.
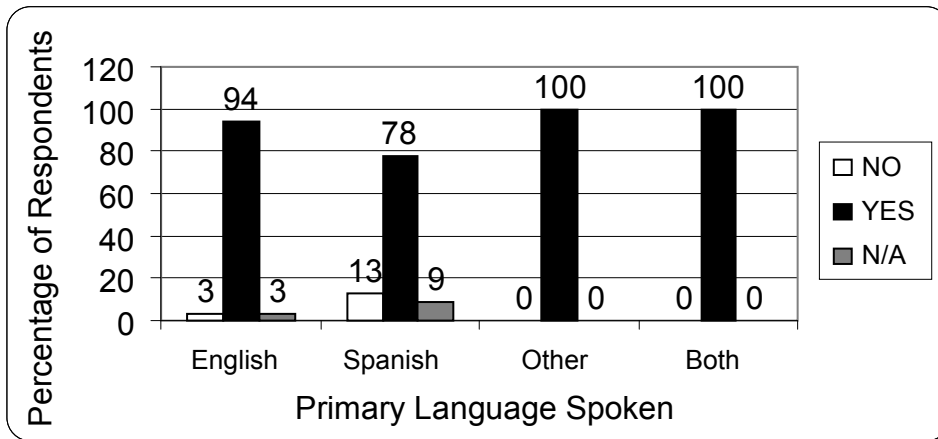
Figure 5. Latino parents feel comfortable questioning their child's educators (*N*=132).

Respondents revealed feeling uncomfortable communicating with educators because of a perceived language barrier. Four percent of respondents who reported English as their primary language agreed that they have uncomfortable feelings while 95 % disagreed that they experience uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators because of a perceived language barrier. On the other hand, of those respondents who reported Spanish as their primary language, 29% had uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators while 62% did not have uncomfortable feelings because of a perceived language barrier (Figure 6).
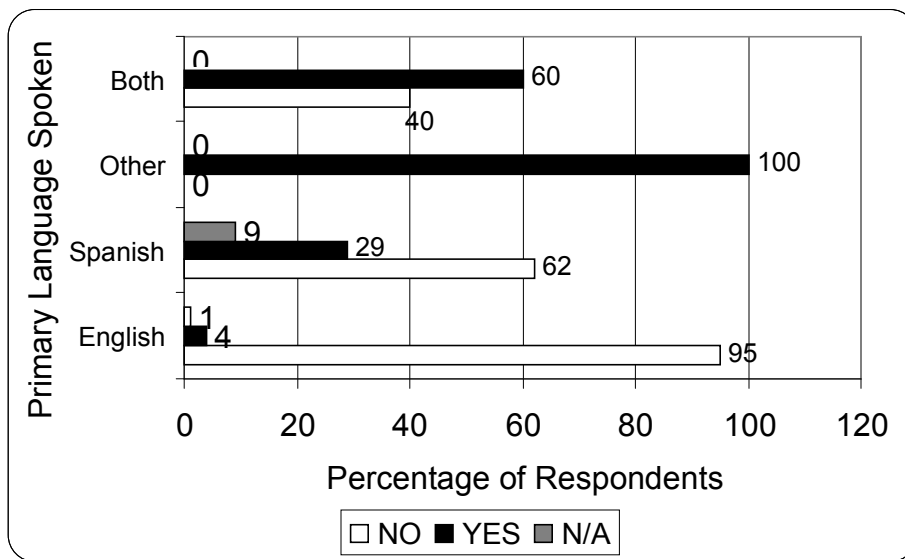
Figure 6. Feeling uncomfortable communicating with child's educators because of a perceived language barrier (*N*=132).

Respondents also reported their annual household income as illustrated in Figure 3. Twenty percent of respondents chose not to disclose this information. Including those parents who chose not to disclose their household income information, 15% of all respondents reported $100,000 or more as their annual household income, while 33% of all respondents reported an annual household income below $40,000.
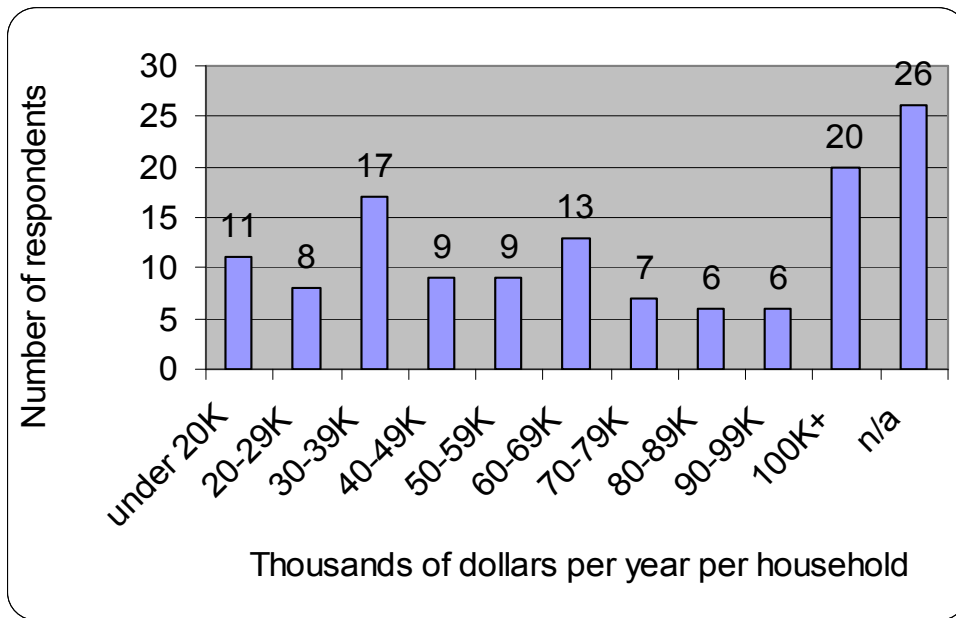
Figure 7. Annual household income of parent population (*N*=132).

The first five Likert scale statements on the questionnaire asked for information about parent perceptions of parent involvement. Respondents were also asked to answer ten questions based on a four-point Likert scale to include the options; 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree. The questions in this section of the questionnaire provided the researcher with information revealing Latino parent perceptions of what is considered active parent involvement in education. The majority of respondents believed that meetings with their child's high school counselor, meetings with their child's teacher, regularly attending school activities and events, assisting their child with homework regularly, and encouraging their child with words to do well in school and attend college are all examples of parent involvement.

The next five Likert-scale statements on the questionnaire were designed to gather information about parents' feelings toward their involvement in their child's education

and college preparation process. This portion of the instrument asked respondents to answer ten questions based on a Likert scale to include the options; 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree. The questions in this section of the questionnaire provided information about Latino parent perceptions of their level of involvement in the education of their high school student. Respondents revealed that they felt they did not have the knowledge necessary to discuss their child's education with a counselor or teacher (4.5 % strongly agreed and 16% agreed). A majority of respondents disagreed that they did not have the knowledge necessary to discuss their child's education with a counselor or teacher (33.3% disagreed and 42% strongly disagreed). Four percent of respondents chose not to respond. Parents did not feel that they have the authority to question their child's counselor, teacher or school administrator (4.5% strongly agreed and 8% agreed). Twenty-seven percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, while 55% strongly disagreed. Three percent of respondents chose not to provide a response. Parents responded to the statement that they cannot help their child with schoolwork because they do not have the time to do so. Five percent strongly agreed, 8% agreed, 36% disagreed, 49% strongly disagreed, and 2% did not provide a response. Respondents were presented with the statement, "*I feel that I cannot afford to provide my child with educational supplies that he/she needs.*" Seven percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 8% agreed, 33% disagreed and, 46% strongly disagreed with this statement. Five percent of respondents chose not to provide a response. Lastly, respondents were presented with the statement, "*I do not feel comfortable communicating with school officials because of language barriers.*" Six percent of respondents strongly

agreed with this statement, while 8% agreed, 32% disagreed, and 49% strongly disagreed. Five percent did not respond.

The final three questions on the questionnaire designed to elicit Likert-scale responses asked about parents' perceptions of their own involvement in the education and college preparation process of their child. These responses provided information about Latino parents' own involvement behaviors in their child's education. Eighty percent of respondents will not encourage their child to obtain employment while in high school, while 17% will encourage their child to hold a job. Eighty percent of respondents reported that they assist their child with homework regularly, while 17% reported that they do not assist regularly. Finally, 96% of respondents reported that they regularly encourage their child to attend college. One percent of respondents reported that they do not regularly encourage that behavior. Three percent of respondents did not provide a response.

The remaining nine questions on the questionnaire were either open-ended or yes/no questions. These questions asked for information about the parents' perceptions of their involvement behaviors in their children's education and what information the parents feel they need or would like to have in order to facilitate their involvement. For example, parent respondents disclosed the number of meetings they attended with their child's school counselor during the previous school year (see Table 1). Eighty-two percent attended one or more meetings.

Table 1

Parent Participation/Attendance at School Meetings (N=132)

Number of meetings attended with child's school Counselor attended during the previous school year	n	%
0	24	18
1	18	14
2	25	19
3	19	14
4	19	14
5	6	5
6+	10	8
No Response	11	8

When analyzed by primary language spoken, findings revealed that English speaking respondents and Spanish speaking respondents equally reported having met with their child's school counselor during the previous school year.
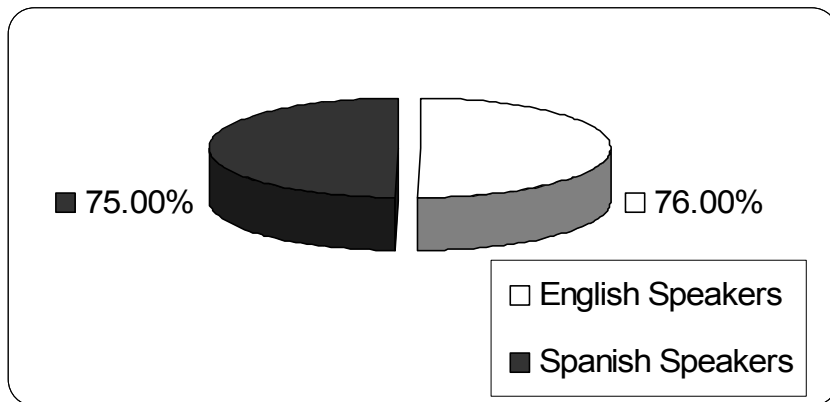
Figure 8. Parents met with school counselor during previous school year (*n*=126).

Respondents also reported whether or not they met with their child's teacher(s) in the previous school year. Eighty-six percent reported having met with their child's teacher(s).
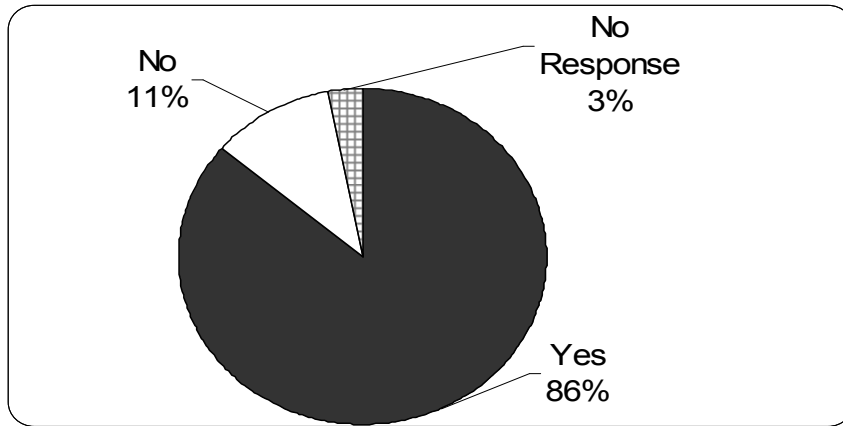
Figure 9. Parents met with teacher during previous school year (*N*=132).

Additionally, respondents reported on whether or not they felt that they had been well

informed about their child's high school exit exam. Seventy-one percent reported YES,

21% reported NO, and 8% did not respond.

Table 2

Parents' Feelings About How Well Informed They Are (N=132)

Parents feel they are well informed about:	Yes		No		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
High School Exit Exam	94	71	27	21	11	8
SAT	107	81	20	15	5	4
What the SAT is used for	101	76	26	20	5	4
How much I will have to pay for my child to take the SAT	68	52	57	43	7	5
When my child is eligible to take the SAT	79	60	44	33	9	7
What is the highest score of the SAT	63	48	60	45	9	7
How many times my child can take the SAT	64	49	57	43	11	8
What resources my child can use to prepare for the test	69	52	53	40	10	8

Next, respondents provided information about their feelings in regard to their comfort

level in knowing how they would pay for their child's college education. More than half

(53%) of respondents reported that they did not feel comfortable, while 43% reported

feeling comfortable. Four percent of respondents did not provide a response. In response

to questions about financial aid for college, respondents provided information about their

knowledge of various sources of financial assistance (see Table 3). Table 3 illustrates that

the majority of respondents feel that they need more information about financial aid for

college and that they do not know enough about Stafford Loans, Pell Grants, FAFSA or

Parent Plus Loans.

Table 3

Parents' Feelings About Financial Aid for College (N=132)

	Yes		No		No Response	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
I need information about financial aid for college	112	85	15	11	5	4
I know what a Stafford Loan is	36	27	92	70	4	3
I know what a Pell Grant is	39	30	89	67	4	3
I know what the FAFSA is	49	37	78	60	5	4
I know what a Parent Plus Loan is	29	22	98	74	5	4

The final set of responses revealed respondents' feelings about communication with

educators. As is illustrated in Table 4, a majority of respondents (90%) reported that they

feel comfortable communicating with their child's educators and 80% feel they know

what questions to ask the school counselor. A majority of respondents (79%) reported

that they do not feel uncomfortable communicating with educators because of a language

barrier. Lastly, nearly half of all respondents (45%) disclosed that they feel educators are

the authority of their child's education. However, 88% of respondents feel comfortable

questioning educators when they think that something is not right.

Table 4

Parents' Feelings About Communication With Educators (N=132)

	Yes		No		No Response	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I feel comfortable communicating with my child's educators	119	90	6	5	7	5
I know what questions to ask my child's school-counselor	105	80	20	15	7	5
I feel uncomfortable communicating with educators because I have a language barrier	22	17	104	79	6	4
I feel that the educators are the authority of my child's education.	59	45	62	47	11	8
I feel comfortable questioning my child's educators when something is not right	116	88	9	7	7	5

Purposeful Sample Analysis of Demographic Questionnaire

Respondents who completed the questionnaires for the Path to College organization were eligible for selection to participate in a focus group for this study. Twenty-three parents participated in focus groups. Focus group sessions began with participants completing a demographic questionnaire. The analysis and findings of the demographic questionnaire are presented in this section.

Participants in the semi-structured focus group interviews consisted of 13 (57%) mothers and 10 (43%) fathers. Participants ranged in age from 31 years of age to 56 years of age. Their average age was 41.5. Similar to the marital status results of the parent population illustrated in Figure 3, Figure 10 demonstrates that participants in the focus groups revealed that 70% were married, 13% were single, 13% were divorced and 4% did not provide a response.

Figure 10. Marital status of purposeful sample (*N*=23).

Focus group participants also disclosed information about their country of birth.

Figure 11 illustrates that 39% of participants reported the United States as their country

of birth. The remaining 61% of participants were born in a country other than the United

States. Additionally, the average length of time parents not born in the U.S. have been in

this country is 18.5 years.
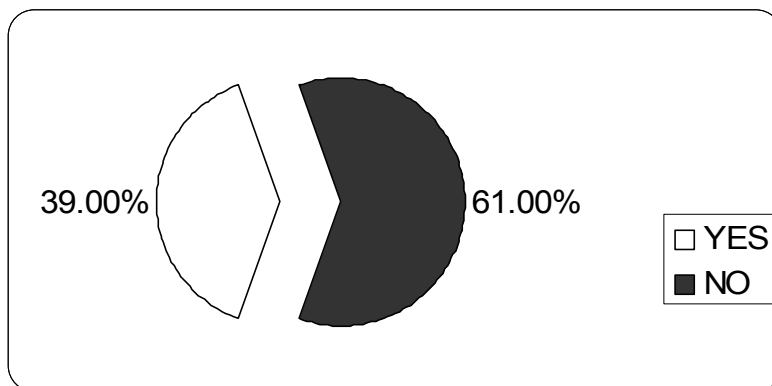
Figure 11. Country of birth of purposeful sample (*N*=23).

Moreover, respondents were asked to disclose the number of children they have.

Of the 23 families studied, the largest percentage of families (35%) reported having four

children. Thirteen percent of families had three children, 26% had two children, and 9%

had one child (see Figure 12). The overall purposefully selected parent sample

demographic information indicated that the majority of respondents had four or more

children (52%). In comparison, according to the U.S. Census from 2001 (as cited in

Hiatt-Michael, 2008) families are becoming smaller with an average of 1.8 children per

household.
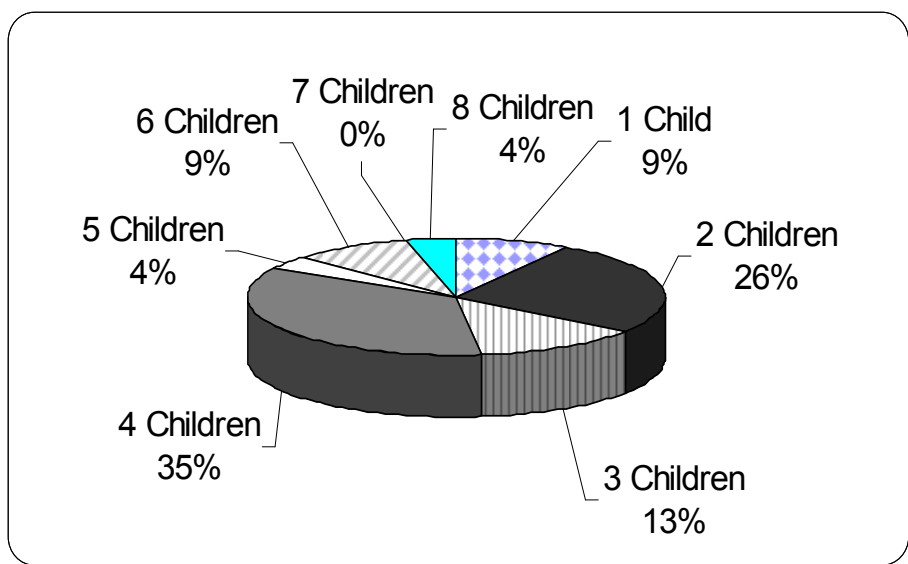
Figure 12. Number of children in the Latino household (*N*=23).

Figure 13 depicts the education levels of the respondents of the purposeful

sample. While 30% reported having completed up to the 12th grade or GED, 35.75% of

respondents reported having completed 11th grade or below. Further, 9.25 % completed

an Associates of Arts degree, 4% completed a bachelor's degree, and 4% completed a

master's degree. None of the respondents reported having completed a doctorate or

professional degree.
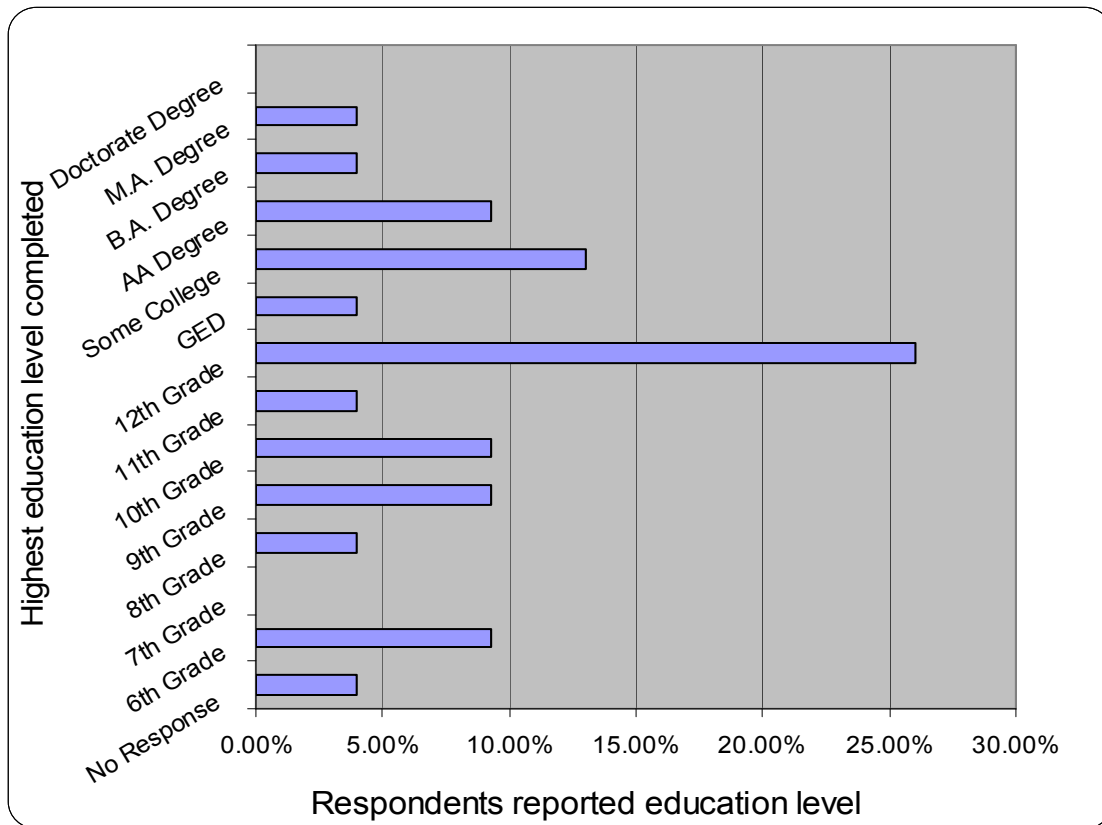
Figure 13. Education levels of purposeful sample (*N*=23).

Respondents disclosed whether or not they have relatives who completed college. Those who reported YES consisted of 57% of the sample, while 43% of them did not have relatives who completed college (see Table 5). Respondents also reported, if they did have relatives who completed college, the city and state where the college(s) was located.

Table 5

Parents Have Relatives Who Completed College (N=23)

	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Do you have relatives who completed college?	13	57	10	43

Of the 57% of parents who reported YES in Table 5 above, 62% reported that their relatives attended college in the United States, while 31% completed college in another country. Seven percent of the latter respondents did not name the country of college completion (see Table 6).

Table 6

Location of Relative's College Completion (N=23)

College location	Parent responses
United States	62%
Other Country	31%
No Response	7%

Finally, Figure 14 illustrates the education levels of respondents from the purposeful sample based on their country of birth. Of the 14 respondents not born in the United States, two completed higher than grade 12. Additionally, of the nine respondents who were born in the United States, one completed below grade 12 and two completed up to grade 12 or GED, while five respondents completed some college or more.
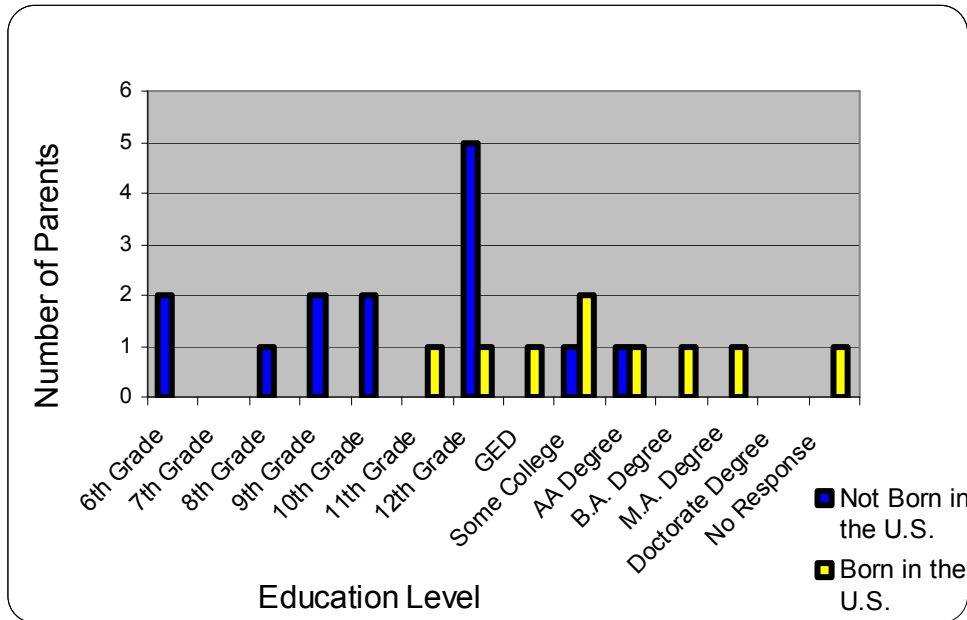
Figure 14. Education level based on country of birth (*N*=23).

Focus Group Analysis and Findings

Following the completion of the demographic information form, the respondents

of the purposeful sample convened in a focus group interview with the researcher (and a

translator when needed). During the semi-structured focus group interviews, data was

recorded on a flip-chart and by audio recording. The researcher made notes immediately

following each group interview in order to capture and highlight topics that emerged. All

focus group interviews were held in May and June, 2008. Upon completion of the focus

group interviews, audio-recordings and transcriptions of the data noted on flip charts

during the group interviews were organized for analysis. Following organization of data,

the researcher and three coders collaborated to code the qualitative data that was gathered

during focus group interviews using constant comparison from a grounded theory

approach. In a grounded theory methodology, analysis of data is conducted in stages for

conceptual manageability and mechanical feasibility (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Grounded theory method involves inductively building theory from data and employs the constant comparative method (Babbie, 2004). According to Babbie, the constant comparative method involves four stages: (a) comparing incidents applicable to categories identified from data, (b) integrating categories, (c) delimiting the theory, (d) writing theory. In this study, using modified grounded theory methods, the researcher applied steps one through three of the constant comparative method described above. The fourth step, writing theory, was not applied since it would have been difficult to write theory based on the responses of 23 respondents.

Coding Data

In a grounded theory methodology, "In particular, systematic coding is important for achieving validity and reliability in the data analysis" (Babbie, 2004, p. 292). Three doctoral students from the Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology were trained by the researcher to code data. Coders reviewed audio recordings and added any new items to notes that were taken on flip charts at each group interview. The coders listened to audio recordings and coded to extract meanings (topics) from responses. During the coding process, coders were trained to: (a) review data for meanings or topics and (b) write down words and phrases that represent these topics and meanings. This was a crucial process in coding and is typically referred to as *coding categories* (Babbie, 2004; Bogden & Biklen, 2003). Inter-rater reliability was established by the comparison of individual coding to the collective coding. It was also the intent for inter-rater reliability to eliminate researcher bias. The outcomes of the coding process

were examined by the researcher to uncover relevant patterns and consistencies across focus groups. The coding process enabled the researcher to arrive at common themes across focus groups and to delimit conclusions based on the findings from the study.

Interpretation of Data

The data from this study was interpreted thematically using a grounded theory approach. The researcher interpreted the responses according to common themes that emerged. Data was triangulated with related literature to justify themes. Following thematic interpretation, data was organized according to the research questions of this study.

Thematic Findings

Focus group interviews provided ample opportunity for Latino parents to convene and discuss some of the pertinent topic areas surrounding their involvement in their children's education. The depth of these group discussions provided a wealth of personal stories and reflections put into words. All personal accounts and reflections, coupled with findings provided through the analysis of archival data, support the six themes that emerged from this study. Each theme represents a common thread uncovered through an extensive examination of the focus group data and the archival data. The six themes are: leadership and parenting, family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources. In the presentation of these themes below all quotes are provided in English, even though some were originally stated in Spanish. An accurate translation is provided in all cases. Table 7 shows the primary language that each respondent spoke during the focus group discussion.

Table 7

Language Spoken by Focus Group Participants (N=23)

Respondent Number	English Speaking	Spanish Speaking
Respondent 1		x
Respondent 2		x
Respondent 3		x
Respondent 4		x
Respondent 5		x
Respondent 6		x
Respondent 7		x
Respondent 8		x
Respondent 9		x
Respondent 10		x
Respondent 11	x	
Respondent 12		x
Respondent 13	x	
Respondent 14	x	
Respondent 15	x	
Respondent 16		x
Respondent 17	x	
Respondent 18		x
Respondent 19	x	
Respondent 20	x	
Respondent 21	x	x
Respondent 22	x	
Respondent 23	x	

Leadership and parenting. Through discussion, respondents revealed that leadership and parenting in their family is highly valued. The theme of leadership and parenting includes concepts of general parenting and leadership within the family such as sacrifice, motivation, modeling behaviors, discipline, and recognizing and embracing challenges. The respondents' discussions of these concepts were based on their past experience as parents, their expectations and vision for the future, and their desire for their children to be successful.

Respondents most associated the concept of *sacrifice* with that of general

parenting and leadership. Strong feelings were espoused about the power and necessity of

sacrifice in order for parents to be leaders within their family unit and demonstrate the

priority of education for their children. Respondents expressed ideas of sacrificing time,

energy, family, money, and personal goals --- all for the sake of fostering their child's

education.

> I emigrated to the U.S. from Mexico seven years ago. And one of the reasons that
> I came is to make a better future for my children. (Respondent 16, personal
> communication, June 1, 2008)
>
> By playing sports, she learns leadership, teamwork, she depends on other people,
> people depend on her, discipline. We keep her involved we keep her involved in a
> lot of sports. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)
>
> In my case, I've looked for tutors for my daughter…I'm a single mom. So I'm
> working in the morning and she is in school. In the afternoon I'm home so I'm
> trying everything. I try to read and try to take the information that will help her.
> Self improvement. (Respondent 13, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Motivation was also a common thread associated with leadership and parenting.

Respondents discussed their attempts to embrace motivation held within themselves and

their children in order to advance educational outcomes and attain educational goals. One

respondent discussed how he is motivated by the urge to prove wrong negative

stereotypes. He also demonstrated his attempts to motivate his child with encouraging

words.

> I am trying to support my daughter. But it's been hard because she is the first and
> the oldest child. She is the first one to go through everything that has to be done to
> get into college. So it's been harder for her to actually start this process off. I've
> seen something that says if your parents didn't graduate from school your children

will not graduate either. But I tell her that she has to work hard because we have to prove stereotypes like those wrong. (Respondent 13, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Researcher: So that's helped to motivate you to be involved, would you say?

Yeah, because I tell her she's smart. I know she can do it. And I tell her she can do it. She should not allow anyone to tell her that she can't do something just because she is Latina. My motivation is to prove stereotypes wrong that I hear about me or my daughter. (Respondent 13, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Respondents also expressed thoughts of motivation inspired by their vision for

educational success.

I encourage her to be the best she can. Prime example, she wants a nice fancy car. I tell her finish college, get a good education, you can get whatever you want. That's my motivation…that's how I get involved. My wife and I encourage her to get involved in activities. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

I tell her, imagine if you get there mija. Then everybody's going to see you because when you know that somebody finishes the university, look, I tell her, look. You see some kind of a respect for that person. You admire that person…It doesn't matter, but you see that person is somebody…When they get there, when they finish, you see that they are accomplished. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Motivate them to have a better life. If they work hard there are opportunities, so to give them support and motivation because we didn't have it ourselves. (Respondent 12, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Intrinsic motivation to succeed was also espoused.

The children's desire to reach a higher level motivates us to be involved. (Respondent 4, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

With or without money. If you want to study, if you want to learn, if you're self-motivated, you'll be able to go on and do whatever it takes regardless of money. (Respondent 7, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

I definitely believe that me getting educated, that's one of the things that is keeping me motivated. Knowing what is going on out there. Getting myself

involved in the educational system. Going to talk to counselors, getting closer to other professors, asking questions, getting to know other people like other people that know how hard it is to be Latino and the struggles you have to go through to get educated. And I know that when you are close to other people they teach you the motivation and you can go back home and show your children. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Further, respondents also associated the concept of *modeling behaviors* with that

of general parenting and leadership. There were expressions of the power of modeling

behaviors in order for parents to be leaders within their family unit and demonstrate the

priority of education for their children.

I just took my GED (General Education Development) yesterday. It's my birthday today. My goal was that before I turned 50, I would earn my GED. So I did it. It was a goal that I set so that my daughter could…now by me focusing, doing homework, and studying, my daughter sees that. I tell her it's never too late to get your education. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

To help our kids get to the highest level of education, we support everything that has to do with education to the extent that we try to involve ourselves in all types of programs. Whatever is available to help our kids, we take part in that so that our kids see that our involvement is big and that we are in to it and that, because we are involved, we try to instill in the older child that he should also try to be the leader and role model for his younger brothers and sisters. We tell him that his younger siblings will want to be like him. We feel that if we show our support and that he takes every opportunity that he has, then the younger children will see that they will always have someone who has leadership qualities and will be able to guide them. (Respondent 3, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Monkey see monkey do. That's what I think. Because if your children can see that you are interested in your own education. I can see that you are making a role model for your children. They looking at you reading, they will be reading. They looking at you getting ready for a test, they will get ready for a test as well. You get your college education, they will most likely do the same. If she can do it, I can do it and this is what we do at home. We need to get educated, we're gonna' get educated and that's the main goal. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Additionally, respondents associated the concept of *discipline* with that of general

parenting and leadership. Discipline was expressed as a means to successful parenting,

establishing leadership as a parent and keeping focus on educational success.

> I tell her, softball, that's extra. If your grades go down, I don't care if you have playoffs you ain't going, you're studying. So she knows she has to balance the two. If she wants to play, she has to keep her grades up. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

> I make sure that my child has a program set up for organization. A routine so that certain things take place at certain times, like a schedule. (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

> The concept of *challenge* was also associated with that of general parenting and

leadership. Strong feelings were expressed about the power and necessity of recognizing

and embracing challenges in order for parents to be leaders within their family unit and

maintain focus on the priority of education for their children. Respondents expressed

thoughts about challenges they face in the form of finances, peer influence, time and

energy, and single parenting.

Financial stability was often mentioned as a challenge to parenting and to being

involved in children's education. One respondent expressed, "When you are the only one

working in the family, it's hard to save money…just one paycheck to stretch that

far"(Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008).

Peer influence was another expression heard across focus group interviews as a

challenge. Respondents articulated feelings that adolescent peers become competition to

parenting and leadership within the family. One respondent reported that conflict within

the home erupted because of peer influence; "There you see the influence of the friends.

That got her to want that quinceañeara" (Respondent 23, personal communication, June

14, 2008). Respondents discussed why it is more difficult to be involved in the education

of their adolescent children versus when the children were younger.

> The kids don't pay as much attention when they're older than when they're
> smaller. They have friends that will influence them when they are at the older
> ages and the friends have more influence than us parents. (Respondent 21,
> personal communication, June 14, 2008)
> They get older, then they want to rebel. They don't like what you're saying.
> (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)
> Now it's you against five or six of their friends. (Respondent 21)
> Right. (Respondent 20)
> And not just the friends, but all the people at the school. (Respondent 21)
> And then things that they sometimes watch on TV. There tends to be media
> influence. (Respondent 20)

Time and energy were reported to be common deficits that contribute to the

challenges to being involved, or as involved as parents would like to be, in their

children's education.

> I think that I want to be more involved. Because sometimes I have to work a lot
> and I postpone the…if I want to go talk with a teacher or something like that, I
> say "ok, I'm going to go next week." And then next week comes and I postpone
> that and I think I need to set the date and then OK, let's do it. (Respondent 21,
> personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> I wish I had more time and to be present more often. (Respondent 18, personal
> communication, June 8, 2008)

> I personally feel that a lot of times I personally could or should do a lot more. And
> I feel very frustrated by this. Some of it is because of my time because I'm so
> busy with things. And some of it is because I feel like he doesn't want my help.
> But in truly helping him with his school work, most of the time it feels like he just
> wants me to stay away…Its frustrating, but I'm not going to shove it down his
> throat if he doesn't want it. (Respondent 17, personal communication, June 8,
> 2008)

Time and energy were reported to be especially taxing on those parents who were raising

their children as single parents.

> **Researcher:** What would you say are challenges?
> Time, energy, you have to be there psychologically. And you have to be ready
> because you don't only get tired physically, you get tired emotionally...I will
> come back from work in the evening and make sure that they have dinner. Make
> sure that they're done with their homework. Make sure that they have clean
> clothes. Make sure that they're ready for the next day and I will just be driving
> myself. And it's hard because there is only so much that you can do physically,
> only so much that your body can take. (Respondent 23, personal communication,
> June 14, 2008)
> **Researcher:** Did you mention that you are a single parent?
> Yes. (Respondent 23)
> **Researcher:** Would you say that that's a challenge?
> Huge challenge because I have to do everything by myself. I have to do
> everything by myself. (Respondent 23)

Family and culture. Through discussion, respondents revealed that family and

culture are highly valued. The theme of family and culture includes concepts of cultural

values, extended family support and discrimination. The respondents' discussions around

these concepts were based on their past experiences as a Latino parent, their experiences

as a Latino in the United States, and their experiences with extended family.

Across focus groups, many respondents dialogued about *cultural values* as an

essential component to their involvement in their children's education. Strong feelings

were espoused about the power and necessity of cultural values in order for parents to be

authentic with their children. Discussion of cultural values included topics of family as a

priority, hard work ethic, traditions, and cultural communication habits.

> School is important for me. But I have to do this. Family is first and so I have to
> drop my classes and I have to dedicate myself to my daughter. But that doesn't
> mean that I'm not going to go back. (Respondent 23, personal communication,
> June 14, 2008)

> We don't have a lot of money, but we are a working class family making the best of what we have. I think it's equally important to teach our children that things are not just handed to them; they need to work hard and have goals. I feel that we have equal opportunities. It's up to us as individuals to utilize our resources to make things happen in our lives. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Communication was also expressed by parents as a cultural value as they attempted to make sense of differences in communication expectations. Respondents recognized differences in communication expectations between Latinos who may not necessarily speak English very well or who may not be from the United States originally and individuals of other races and ethnicities in the United States.

> When I go to the meetings, there was only five or six parents. Just the moms, sometimes one or two fathers. And I moved to Yucaipa. There is more white people and Asian people and the minute you can see 20 or 25 parents together and I see the difference because I was living in Fontana for three years….and I see the difference. The meeting there was a big difference. And for Latinos, they never ask questions. The teacher says "you understand, you have questions?" And the people answer, "its OK." But in Yucaipa the people is always asking, asking, asking, asking to the teacher. I see the difference because I'm from Mexico…but I see the difference. Why do Latinos always say everything is OK? This is why we need to change. We need to learn more. Because my concern is that some teachers don't help Latinos. (Respondent 16, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Parents also spoke of cultural pressures experienced during parenting. As an example, during one focus group a father spoke of the quinceañeara. This is a teen girl's 15th birthday celebration. Many Latino families highly value this milestone in a teenager's life, which has both spiritual and symbolic meaning. The respondent explained his struggle with the cultural expectation to provide the typical celebration for his daughter's 15th birthday.

> I talk a lot with my daughter about the quinceañeara. You know the quinceañeara. Then she started "Pa, I want just little quinceañeara." And I said no. Then I said

OK. I ended up spending like $20,000.00 in March. Ok, now she said. "Pa, my friend's uncle gave her a car." I don't have the money. It's hard, its hard. But the thing is that I have another two daughters and told her, mija, if I do this, I have to do the same for them. By the time that you are going to the university, the other one is going to be 15 years old. But they don't listen. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Experiences with extended family in regard to education were expressed throughout the focus group discussions. *Extended family support* is a concept included under the family and culture theme because respondents revealed poignant thoughts about their family's contribution to their current philosophies toward the education of their children. For the most part, respondents felt that their own parents achieved low levels of education. One respondent stated, "I grew up in Mexico and my father was always working since 7:00 in the morning to 10:00 in the night. And my mother, she never went to school" (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008). Low levels of education achieved by their own parents were attributed to low levels of involvement by their parents in their own education.

Just the basic. They didn't push me and tell me "You have to do it." (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

My mother didn't work when we were little so she was around a lot. She volunteered at the school and was known by my teachers and peers. My father worked most of the time and wasn't as involved as my mother. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Additionally, many of the respondents noted that they have support from members of their family in regard to education. This support from extended family was felt to have a positive impact on educational outcomes.

I have help from my mom. She helps me out a lot to either take care of them while I'm doing some other things and that way when I come back I know I have

more time for them. Instead of spending time cleaning the house, I can spend
more time with them doing homework, dealing with any issues that are going on
at school…I will be able to be there for them. I think that when the family gives
you support, that means that you will have more energy as well to give to your
children to spend more time with them. I know it's going to be kind of like
illogical, but when you don't have to worry about money or any of those issues,
psychologically you can be there for them. (Respondent 23, personal
communication, June 14, 2008)

It wasn't until I was forced to study by my godmother. She made me work harder.
That's what made the big difference. (Respondent 5, personal communication,
May 31, 2008)

I have family support. My sisters are a great asset to my kids. (Respondent 19,
personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Discrimination is another concept included under the umbrella of the family and culture

theme that emerged in this study. Only respondents not born in the U.S. and Spanish-

speaking respondents revealed thoughts of being victim to discrimination because of their

race, skin color, citizenship or social class. Issues of discrimination were viewed by

respondents as challenges to being involved in their children's education.

Because of immigration issues. Even if a child has done really well and has gotten
good grades, if they are not here legally, they might not have the opportunity to
go to college or attend the university. (Respondent 6, personal communication,
May 31, 2008)

However, it was recognized that instances of discrimination also fueled involvement in

the education of the respondents' children. For instance, one respondent mentioned an

instance that she perceived as discrimination. She proceeded to discuss at length how she

dealt with the instance and how she pursued a resolution from the school administration.

I really had a really bad experience last year for her in school…she make the
homework on the computer for almost five hours and the teacher said he will not
accept work because it is too high quality for something coming from a Mexican.
(Respondent 12, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Respondents also discussed amongst each other about how social class discrimination is

perceived to be a challenge for involvement in education and the quality of education that

their children receive.

> Money is a challenge. But by my home, the nice areas there are better schools.
> And the schools in the poor neighborhoods do not have the same types of
> programs for students as those schools in the nice neighborhoods. The teachers
> are more involved with the students in the better schools with more money. I
> think it's the more money that makes the better schools and better teachers as
> well. (Respondent 3, personal communication, May 31, 2008)
> But it's not the money. If it's a good student, they will do well. (Respondent 6,
> personal communication, May 31, 2008)
> No, that is true. What makes…the school is better with money. (Respondent 3)
> It's a good teacher. There are good teachers at poor schools. If the teacher is good,
> it doesn't matter what school it is. (Respondent 6)
> I'm not saying that all schools in poor neighborhoods are bad. No.
> My opinion is about good schools can be better with money. Education and
> schools can be supported by more money. (Respondent 3)

Communication. Respondents' perceptions of their involvement in the education

of their children involve various forms of communication. The theme of communication

includes concepts of language, assertiveness and expectations. The respondents'

discussions about these concepts were based on their past experiences as parents, their

expectations and vision for the future and their desire for their children to be successful.

Respondents shared their perceptions of how *language* is a significant factor in

determining their success in communicating with teachers, administrators and students

alike. Whether the primary language in the home was English or Spanish, one thing

remained, that the ultimate goal for the children was to go to college and to be successful.

Respondents expressed belief that language disconnect between Spanish-speaking parents

and English-speaking educators creates challenges or "barriers" and embarrassment due

to their not speaking English properly.

> Yeah, that too. Because I don't speak English very good and I think that is one of the reasons that I…right now, they have an interpreter everywhere, so it helps a lot. But its better if you know the language. Because I have two kids in elementary and 80% of the people there speak Spanish. Maybe more. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> Not so much now, because there is always someone who can translate. In the past it was an issue…In the past, you were embarrassed to ask if you didn't understand something. But now, it's a lot easier because you have someone who can talk for you who works at the school. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Several parents passionately expressed discontent with the idea that some teachers use

existing language disconnect between themselves and parents as an excuse to avoid

communication entirely. Basically, it was believed that some teachers might consider

Spanish-speaking parents to be a nuisance because of the extra effort it takes to

communicate with those parents.

> With my language. I speak very little English. It's hard to explain. The language sometimes creates a barrier. They use it as a clutch if they don't want to communicate. (Respondent 16, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Several respondents expressed belief that language should neither be a challenge nor a

barrier for parents to being involved in their children's education. They firmly believed

that motivation is the strongest predictor of parent involvement in education.

> Even though people do speak English and are able to communicate, if they are not interested or not involved in their education, then it doesn't matter whether they speak the language or not. Parents have to make sure that they have to be able to be interested and involved so that they can show their child the right way and push their child in the right direction and they know how to get things done for them. It's basically just their own interest in what's going on. It doesn't really matter. Language is only one variable but not really, because even if you do speak

English, you just you have to show that you care. It's important. (Respondent 8, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Assertiveness is another concept that was strongly associated with communication in focus group discussions. Respondents spoke of several instances where they found that being assertive in their communication with teachers, administrators and students alike was a means of demonstrating involvement in their children's education. For instance, one respondent told a story about how she was dissatisfied with her child's school, so she transferred her to a smaller, private school. The dissatisfaction and transfer required assertiveness on the part of the parent.

> I applied. They only have two or three spaces per year. I applied and they called me and told me that they have a space for her. (Respondent 12, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Many respondents also expressed belief that parents have a responsibility to demonstrate involvement in their children's educational lives. Adolescent children are seen to be more difficult to communicate with than younger children because of growing independence and peer influence. The belief is held that parents of adolescent children often need to be assertive and persistent in their communication with children.

> I talk to my kids every day. I ask "how was it today." I say to explain to me. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> To be with your children most of the time. Spending quality time with them. It means asking a lot of questions about school, about how they feel, about how their teachers are treating them, making sure they are done with their homework. It means to try to know at least 90% of every single thing that your kids want to do or are planning on doing the following day so that you can be aware of what is going on in their lives. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Focus group discussions also revealed that respondents held the belief that assertiveness

is often required when communicating with teachers and administrators. Only

respondents who reported having achieved a low level of education (below 12th grade)

disclosed that they considered teachers and administrators as authority figures in their

children's education and reported being intimidated in some instances by the teachers

because of teachers' high levels of educational attainment.

> Now I can go and do something about it. Now I can go and talk to the teacher and confront them with a situation. Before, I couldn't; before, I couldn't because probably I was afraid. They are the authority and I didn't want to get in trouble. She's gonna' or he's going to take care of my son or my daughter and they're going to make their lives miserable and I was afraid of that. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)
> **Researcher:** When would you say that that changed for you?
> When I got educated. (Respondent 23)
> **Researcher:** When you say, "I got educated," what do you mean by that?
> Well, when I said, "I got educated," I'm saying that I enrolled myself in ESL classes. I have the exposure of college and talking to other Latino professors about it. Knowing about our history in this country. Knowing about our rights as parents, as students. That made a big difference. Then I knew that I had the right to go and ask questions. Then I knew I had the right to go and tell what I liked and what I did not like. (Respondent 23)
> **Researcher:** Would you say that before you got educated on that, that your fears or your thoughts on it stemmed from your experience in a different country in the education?
> Yes. Absolutely. (Respondent 23)

In regard to general parenting, respondents discussed assertiveness used in

communicating with their children. Most respondents talked about the need to verbally

discipline their adolescent children and to express their expectations. One respondent

spoke of his experience with general parenting and communicating with his spouse about

disciplining their children. This respondent felt that his spouse was too assertive in her

communication with their child.

> But she [my wife] doesn't push or doesn't talk nice. She's like, "You have to do this, and you need to do that." And I say "Hey. No need to talk to them [the children] like that. You need to talk to her [eldest daughter]. Don't try to put her down, just talk." (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Respondents also associated the concept of *expectations* with that of communication. Strong feelings were espoused about the necessity of communicating expectations to both students and teachers in order for parents to demonstrate education as a priority for their children. While many respondents did not speak about direct verbal communication of their expectations to their children, they did speak of common behaviors, priorities, and their vision---which all reveal the expectations held by them.

> Making sure that they have a safe place, where they can feel safe. They have a place where they can do their homework, a place where they can have food and they can be provided with all the school supplies that they need. Make sure they have food and shelter and transportation. Listening to their music and knowing what they like. Getting to know their friends. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> Parents have to make sure that their kids understand that high school is not enough. You can finish through high school but really, it's not enough. You need to want to go on. And parents have to make their children to want to go on, to encourage to go on beyond high school. In that respect, communication is very important. To be able to stay communicating with the children and be aware of what the teenagers are doing on a regular basis and letting them know that you as the parents are aware…that's how your pushing him and making them take advantage of things that are available. There is life beyond high school. It is not the end. (Respondent 2, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Further, respondents' expectations for educational success were demonstrated through discussions about their children's peers. Many respondents revealed that they communicate expectations to their children through judgments and the things they say about their children's peers.

And they go and sleep there. I see the next day 8:00 or 9:00 all of the parents go and pick them up. But sometimes there is one, they [the parents] don't care. I say, "Mija, I like your friends and everything, but they [the parents] don't care." When my daughter has friends over, my wife cooks and we take them to the movies. We try to make them [her friends] happy. But you know, all her friends say thank you and give my wife a hug. But that girl, she just says "OK, see you, bye." I say to my daughter, "You know what, I don't know about your one friend." My daughter says, "Oh, no papi. She's good." I see that she is not like my daughter. I don't know, I try to pull her away from that friend. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Do you see how this friend, how this friend is here? Do you see how this friend is? Do you see there's a difference, babe? Open your eyes, see that there's a difference. Look how they're being raised. Not that I think that she's a horrible bad person, but I just have to watch her. (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Additionally, there were those respondents who did, in fact, discuss their use of direct verbal communication of expectations to their children. Respondents who participated in these discussions were English speaking.

I tell her to try to make friends who are looking for the same things that you are looking for. The same goals. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

They supplied everything. My father supplied everything. He talked to us, but he never pushed us, like you have to do this and you have to do that. Maybe that's why I'm doing this with my daughter. I wanted to go the university in Mexico because when I was 16 years old, I came here. He told me, you need to start here and let's work for one or two years and then you go back…I feel like sometimes when I see my kids studying and all that, I wanted to and I need to. Like I'm not done with school. That's why I tell my kids, "You have to do it." (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)
Unfortunately, in our family, nobody has gone to college. My oldest is in community college deciding to where to go. But nobody really has, that's the hard part. So it's really mom influencing. They [extended family] do say "Oh, mija, you should go to school, you should continue school." But it's very important now if you don't get that from pretty much the rest of the family. I keep trying to tell her, "You'd be their role model. You will have a lot of little cousins that will look up to you too." You know, and I try to motivate them and get them to do

that, you know to push them to still continue. (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Partnerships and networks. Underpinnings of *Partnerships and networks* dominated most of the discussions across focus groups. Respondents held strong beliefs about the extent to which networks and partnerships would advance their own involvement in their children's education and ultimately further the social and academic mobility of their children. Discussions of partnerships and networks largely included school, community, and students. The respondents' passion for these networks and partnerships revealed a sense of reliance on them for information and support.

All respondents demonstrated desires to have a partnership with their children's *school*. They expressed feelings that they could learn from such a partnership and that it would give their children an advantage toward educational success. One respondent in particular, spoke of what parent involvement meant to her. She mentioned partnership with her child and with the school and school personnel. "What does it mean to me. Exactly that, involvement…Being very involved, not only with them, but with school as far as with counselors" (Respondent 22, personal communication, June 14, 2008). Another conveyed the effort that is put forth to form and maintain a partnership with the teacher and student:

> I encourage my child to get involved with school clubs. I make sure my child attends school daily. I keep in touch with their teachers. They are given my cell phone, work and home numbers. My children are rewarded for good grades and discipline for bad grades, anything lower than a C. (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Respondents also articulated their desire to partner with their children's teachers and

school personnel.

> It makes all the difference in the world. It makes all the difference. The teacher
> who's concerned about the students' education, it's a big difference when they are
> really there for the children, not only educational but also because they can show
> that they support them emotionally. Let me give you an example. I have a teacher
> who used to be a psychology teacher who saw me that I was getting out of a bad
> divorce and I was down and I didn't have self-esteem and because of him, I
> continued my education. Because of him, I knew I could do it. (Respondent 23,
> personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> Ideally, the teacher and the parent should form a partnership or support group.
> (Respondent 16, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

However, respondents expressed that it is not always easy to form or maintain

partnerships with teachers and schools. Some challenges that were identified across focus

group discussions included teachers' unwillingness to communicate and partner with

parents, communication disconnect and overall lack of teacher motivation.

> Yes. You always think that the teacher is the authority and the teacher is the one
> who is going to tell you what to do and what not to do. You are just waiting for
> that. Maybe since we don't have all the information about how to help our
> children to get educated and what are the right classes that they need to get, we
> are just going with the flow. Like we don't go and ask questions. We feel that we
> don't have the right to do that because they know what they are doing and when
> you make an effort to contact them, the teacher about that, for me usually teachers
> won't return phone calls. Won't return emails. I will leave messages at the office.
> They won't return my messages. So you feel left out. You feel like I cannot push
> the teacher, so you have to go with the flow. You cannot do anything else. You
> just have to follow what they are doing or what they're telling you what it should
> be. But I don't think it should be like that. (Respondent 23, personal
> communication, June 14, 2008)
> I have one [a teacher] as a matter of fact that complained that all he would do is
> say "OK, here's your lesson, go ahead and do it and I'm gonna' be right here. If
> you need any help call me." But not actually teach. (Respondent 20, personal
> communication, June 14, 2008)

> There are good and bad teachers. Some of them really don't focus and I had a problem with one of the math teachers. Teachers should focus more on the student. (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Respondents emphasized their desire to have a personal relationship with their children's teacher(s), where they feel comfortable communicating and working together to support the student.

> I think it makes a big difference when they show you that they care and they get kind of like personal with you, not only like this is my title and you have to respect me because this is my title. But when they really go down and are humble and are willing to have a personal relationship with you. That makes a big difference. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Respondents who were born in a country other than the United States agreed that partnerships between parents and teachers are very similar to the communication between parents and teachers in their native countries. Teachers and parents become a part of each other's networks with the education of children as the commonality.

> It's different in terms of the education, but not in the communicating with the teachers. The communication with teachers is pretty much the same in the U.S. and in Mexico. (Respondent 16, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

> One teacher said that it's not the kids' responsibility to take care of the little brother or this or that. No its you and the mother, not her [student]. Her responsibility is the school and homework and all that. I start thinking about it and I say, "Yeah, that's true." (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Finally, the various roles that are present with a partnership were discussed at length across focus groups. Through discussion about roles in partnerships, it is evident that respondents feel parents share a significant responsibility in the education of their children with teachers and students alike.

> The schools play a very important role, which is to make information available and accessible to my child. Teachers, administrators and counselors are paid a salary if my child takes advantage of their information or not. My job as a parent is to make sure my child is respectful and ready to learn. (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

> I feel it is my responsibility to work alongside the teacher and re-emphasize the teachings learned in the classroom, both behavioral and academic. I keep in consistent contact with my children's teachers and talk to my children often about school and the expectations I have. I also feel it is important to make sure my children are on the correct path to continue after high school on to college. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

> I feel the teacher's role is to teach the state mandated education. I feel it is their responsibility to contact me as necessary to keep me updated as well as allow me to step in as needed to correct any issues that can't be handled at school. I feel it is important to work as a team in my children's education. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

All respondents demonstrated a desire to have a partnership and network within their *community*. They expressed feelings that they could learn from such a partnership and that it would give their children an advantage toward educational success. One respondent in particular discussed her feelings about an educational program that her child participated in and, as a result, formed a network for support.

> To have programs and outside help, that's great. Because the family [support group] that she has, every single week or two week she has emails or calls. They say, "What happened, do you need help? Do you need something?" That's great. (Respondent 12, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Other respondents articulated perceptions of the importance of forming networks and partnerships within their communities. These networks and partnerships are believed to provide useful information and resources for the respondents to aid their pursuit of higher education for their children.

I'm the only one working in my family. You need to work more because they ask you for more things. Especially, I don't know about boys, but girls they ask for a lot for the school too. And everything's getting too expensive. Now, I'm thinking about after high school. Then the thing is that when she finishes high school, the other one [younger child] is going to start high school. I talk to a friend during the week and he told me that his daughter is going to Pomona College and that he is going to pay $80,000.00 for three years. I started thinking, aye aye aye, how am I going to do this? Maybe I need to work more or I need to be prepared for that time. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

I think with communicating with other people that have their kids that have gone further. You know, I have a friend now that has two daughters now that are out of college. And she gives me that info. "Look at this or go on the internet and look at this." She helps with the information that I need. (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Partnerships and networks developed in the *home* were also highly praised by respondents across focus groups. Respondents believed that partnering with their spouse and children is important to the pursuit of their children's higher education.

I definitely believe that I should be more involved, because I know that the more involved you are, the greater the success in your children's education. If you are there for them, they will follow through. If you are not there, they will be doing other things. They will be just showing that they don't care. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

I think that it's harder because they are growing and maybe they start building their own criteria and become more independent. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Another respondent, who is a college graduate, said:

I personally have email to my children's teachers, which I use regularly to discuss the progression of my children. My wife and I both go to all of their school activities, i.e. choir awards, academic awards, open house, etc. We have in the past also helped in the classroom. Unfortunately, we both have fulltime jobs and cannot do this as much anymore. We are however, always available in the evenings to help with homework and discuss the day's events. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Respondents also expressed thoughts about the need for parents to foster and monitor

partnerships between teachers and students.

> The teacher needs make the children want to be educated and motivate the kids to continue in education versus just going to the classroom and teach. It's almost like whoever wants to go to class to learn, gets the instruction, but if the teacher does not make everyone be a part of that instruction process, then its not going to happen. But it is the teacher who needs to make it happen and motivate for higher education as well as the parents. (Respondent 4, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

> *Background and knowledge.* The underpinnings of respondents' backgrounds and

educational knowledge were present in most of the discussions across focus groups.

Respondents held strong beliefs about the extent to which their personal background and

educational knowledge influences their involvement in their children's education.

Discussions of backgrounds and knowledge largely included remarks about respondents'

education level and knowledge of the U.S. education system.

As noted above in Figure 13, the majority of respondents in this study who were

not born in the United States have not attained levels of education beyond high school. In

fact, the education level of respondents who were not born in the U.S. (n=14) is largely

12th grade or below. Conversely, of those respondents who were born in the U.S. (n=9),

one completed below grade 12, while two completed up to grade 12 or the GED. Further,

one respondent reported having completed an Associate of Arts degree, one completed a

bachelor's degree and one completed a master's degree. Two respondents reported

having completed some college, but no degree attainment.

> I had most of my support from my mom and my grandmother. My father was a fisherman and was pretty much working all the time. I came home one day beat up. My father told me, "That's it, why are you going to school if you're just going

to get beat up?" And I was told I can't go to school. But my grandmother took me under her wing and assisted me with everything. My mom helped financially. That is how I was able to go to school until the 10th grade. Basically, because of a lot of poverty in those days in those areas and everything, there was not a lot of financial support to go to school. (Respondent 2, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

They didn't really push to get good grades. They were certain as far as myself, I couldn't come home with anything below a C. That was elementary. As far as pushing toward college, that was just, she did for a little bit, but then I turned around and got married really young. But it was just a sort of a "I hope you go" and that's it. Not involved, not ever went to school to go see about, you know, you need these requirements for this in order to get to college. It was not much. (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Low levels of education were articulated through discussions of challenges respondents

experience in dealing with their children's schoolwork and educational content.

Researcher: Regarding your children in high school, do you feel like you're able to help them with their homework?
Group: Respondents 1-10: No. Not too much. (Personal communication, May 31, 2008)

My challenge is trying to understand their homework. It wasn't like when we were kids. Algebra, trigonometry, all that. And, what they're trying to do now is not what like when we were kids. And so it's like your going to school to learn what they're trying to learn so you can make sure they're on the right track. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Many respondents dialogued about feelings of inadequacy in regard to educational

knowledge and being able to assist their children in their educational endeavors.

But that's what I think, that I'm behind. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

I don't have that level of math in my background. Not only is there a level difference, but it's a different kind of math. The math taught in my country was a different kind of math. (Respondent 6, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Parents expressed needing to overcome feelings of inadequacy in order to remain

involved as parents. They stated that assisting their children with educational content was

difficult because of their lack of knowledge and low educational level.

> Now when she talks to me, there are some things that I know I don't understand. I
> feel that I'm behind now that she's getting older…sometimes she asks me, "Pa
> what do you think about this, what do you think about that?" I don't know mija.
> Give me time and I investigate this and that but some of the things I say that you
> know what mija tell me what you want to find out because I don't know.
> (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> I was going to classes for GED so I would also be able to help the kids. I took
> classes until I wasn't able to continue. I had to haul them to this sport or that
> activity and it took time away from being able to go back and learn myself.…It's
> a very good idea to back to school as an adult. (Respondent 11, personal
> communication, June 1, 2008)

> At home, as far as, you know, assisting them with their homework I try to answer
> some of their questions if we are able to. Sometimes we end up taking them to the
> library because they need further assistance with their studies, references and so
> forth. Or even online on the Internet we try to help them out in that respect at
> home. (Respondent 14, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Respondents expressed thoughts about their *knowledge of the U.S. educational system.*

Knowledge of the U.S. educational system was consistent with the level of education

attained by respondents. Mostly, however, respondents who were not born in the U.S.

reported experiencing adjustment to the U.S. educational system, since it was very

different from that of other countries.

> Learning better communication is better because coming from my background
> and how I was brought up and looking at things from the way I was taught and the
> things that I had to go through was very different from what is happening here. So
> I am trying to apply my historical values and rules to my child who was born here
> and is in the system here in the U.S. and frequently there are clashes because of
> the different way of thinking. So I am constantly trying to improve
> communication as a parent to unify on the approach or idea to get things done.
> (Respondent 12, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

> One of the main differences is that the education seems more advanced in Mexico, maybe a grade level or two above in Mexico. (Respondent 16, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Respondents who participated in discussions that revealed undeveloped foundational knowledge of the U.S. educational system felt that they needed more information about the system in the U.S. in order to be effective as a parent for the education of their children. In this regard, one respondent stated, "I need more knowledge about how the educational system works especially finances and scholarships" (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008).

Information and resources. The theme of information and resources emerged as discussions evolved around parents' desire for information and resources to further their involvement in their children's education. Also, to advance the academic achievement of their children. Need for information and resources were particularly pinpointed in the areas of high school education, college, parenting and programs. The common goal surrounding discussions across focus groups was children's educational success and ultimately, their enrollment in college.

In regard to *high school* education, respondents expressed desire for information about the high school exit exam and other standardized testing. Specifically, information was desired about the effect that these tests will have on the child's education and the ways in which parents can help to prepare their children for these tests.

> We first moved to the area, I looked into the schools…When we moved, we transferred over to Chaffey. And they made me keep her a grade down because, I never paid attention to the yearly testing SAT9. Never paid attention. It would come through and I didn't care about it. Well she was way below average which I should have caught since she was probably in first or second grade. So I had to

keep her back a grade. But I think if I would have been more aware of that and
actually paid attention then that might have helped. So definitely, to be more
aware of that and the exit exam. (Respondent 20, personal communication, June
14, 2008)

Respondent discussions also touched on the need for Latino parents to remain focused on

their children's education. According to respondents' perspectives, parents should look

for information disseminated by teachers, attend school functions such as parent-teacher

conferences, and partner with the teachers to establish open communication.

To that end, one respondent stated,

Make sure that we get all the information and respond to it. We also make sure to
attend any function or meeting at the school. Being at the meetings takes care of a
lot of information regarding the student and their education. (Respondent 15,
personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Moreover, respondents expressed desire for mentors to serve needs of parents. One

respondent remarked that parent mentors can provide a wealth of information and

guidance to Latino parents, "Especially with the first one [child]. It will be easier because

we will know which way or how it all works after the first child goes through"

(Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008).

Across focus groups, respondents also discussed desire for information and

resources that would assist their involvement in preparing their children for college. The

majority of discussions revealed that respondents do not feel prepared to assist their

children with the necessary preparation steps to attain college enrollment, mainly because

of their own limited knowledge about what is involved in the college preparation process.

It almost makes you think, if I only would have prepared when they were little, I
would have saved more. (Respondent 22, personal communication, June 14,
2008)

> I wish I had the money to pay for a private tutor so that my child can be better prepared for the college entrance exams. I wish I had the educational level needed to assist my children with homework and projects. I wish I knew what the best choices for accelerated programs are, is it better to take honors or AP or IB classes? (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Furthermore, respondent 21 remarked about the need for information about college majors and programs and the appropriate preparation: "My daughter doesn't know what to do or where to go. Like, she's confused right now. She says, 'oh I'd like to do this or maybe this or maybe that.'" (Personal communication, June 14, 2008). Another respondent discussed positive attributes of outreach efforts made by local colleges and universities.

> My daughter is involved in the GEAR UP program. That's very good too because she's….I think this is the second or third year that she is going to the Cal State during the summer time. I think that's good. And now they are going to give credit for the university or college….first it was just to expose to college, but now I went to the meeting about two months ago. Now they are going to start taking this more serious, more challenging, now they are going to work, do projects and things like that to get credit. (Respondent 21, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

Additionally, discussions about college largely revolved around the economic side of preparing for college. Respondents expressed desire for information and resources in respect to financial assistance and paying for college.

> I feel that I need clear facts about financial aid. What amount of money do I need to have to qualify? What to look for in a school? What classes to take for the first year? What are the best types of loans? How can I help my child succeed when I need to let them grow as an adult? How can I control the partying? (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

> My daughter wishes to go to a four-year university, perhaps out of state. I worry about the money involved in this. She is currently doing what she needs to do academically, but I don't know if this is enough. I feel she will need to get grants,

scholarships, etc. to fulfill this goal. I hope that we are doing all we need to do to
prepare for this. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Table 8 shows a list provided by respondents across focus groups when asked, "What are

some things that you feel you need to know for what your child needs to get into a

college and graduate?"

Table 8

Information and Resources Needed for Children's College Enrollment and Graduation

1.	Educational plan
2.	Scholarship information
3.	Knowing what classes she needs to take in high school to get ready for a four-year institution
4.	A support system
5.	Eligibility requirements
6.	College application process
7.	High school exit exam
8.	SAT9 yearly testing
9.	Information about majors/programs and transfers to the university
10.	Having good high school counselors
11.	Community programs (Path to College, GEAR UP, AVID)
12.	Grants/financial aid
13.	Educational programs for parents
14.	Information about what are the best extracurricular activities for children to engage in for college applications
15.	Information about standardized testing requirements

Parenting is another area where respondents discussed their need for information

and resources. Discussions revealed that respondents need information about how to

assist their children with study habits, how to communicate with adolescent children, and

how to provide resources for their children that would help to advance knowledge.

I need to know how to help my daughter study for college entrance exams. I
would like my daughter to be able to have a mentor she could talk to for career
resources. (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Respondents also held discussions involving the need for proactive parenting and the

impact that being a proactive Latino parent can have on children's educational success.

> I go to the library and I get books. My wife and I get books on how to help my daughter. Communication books, how to help her. Parenting information. There's things, we don't know what kids go through, so books open up our eyes to things that are going on. (Respondent 11, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Shown in Table 9 is a list provided by respondents across focus groups when asked,

"What do you feel you need as a parent to help you be more involved in your children's

education?"

Table 9

Information And Resources Needed By Parents To Enhance Involvement In Children's

Education

1.	Educational programs
2.	Parent motivation
3.	Parent counselor/mentor (educational aspect)
4.	Communication skills with children
5.	Money
6.	Educational programs for parents
7.	Parenting information
8.	Time
9.	Support system of friends/ networks
10.	Communication from teachers
11.	Accommodation by teachers for parents who do not speak English very well and who are not very comfortable speaking because of the English barrier
12.	Information disseminated in Spanish
13.	Effective counselors
14.	Knowledge of the U.S. educational system
15.	Parent involvement guide

Finally, focus group discussions revealed that *programs* that assist parents in

being proactive, provide information and resources, and ultimately help both parents and

children work together toward educational achievement are highly desired. As noted in

Chapter three, respondents in this study are parents of children who attended the Path to

College program. As such, focus group discussions praised the Path to College program

as one that advanced knowledge of both children and parents. Through discussions,

respondents also expressed the need for more accessible programs that are like the Path to

College program.

> Sending them to Path to College. I think that was a blessing myself. I think that
> opened her up so much as far as communicating and actually having that goal.
> (Respondent 20, personal communication, June 14, 2008)
> I see the Path to College as a bridge. A bridge in the respect that you know, she's
> opening a new door and you're providing opportunities and whether it be
> financial or making personal contact with you specifically. You do a lot of
> networking stuff. It's great. There should be more programs like that in my
> opinion. (Respondent 14, personal communication, June 1, 2008)
>
> Because of theses programs, like PIQE, we have learned how to do things, how to
> apply for colleges. They actually have the course at Cal State…which gets us in
> the college environment. It gives us a program and teaches parents how to move
> their kids on to college. It is needed that these programs are available to the
> parents regularly that they just don't go away. It seems that the schools need to
> seek these programs out and keep them at the schools or associated with the
> schools. (Respondent 3, personal communication, May 31, 2008)
>
> The programs have helped the parents because their past history of low or no
> education have been important and because our parents were not able to go to
> school and that culture of education was not passed down to us. These educational
> programs make us parents conscious of education and brings the importance of
> education to the parents. The parents have to take it on and push the children
> forward. It is a rare child that without parent involvement will go on and find his
> own way to the university. But most won't because of language barriers or their
> parent's background. The parents need to have these programs so that they can
> stay on top of the education…the culture of it and be able to push their kids to
> continue to go on. But I take responsibility, but the program makes me think
> about education. (Respondent 7, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

All focus groups were held with parents who were motivated and genuinely wished for

their children to be successful in education, career, and life in general. All perceptions of

respondents that were expressed during focus groups can be summed up by the statement

made by one respondent, "Sí se puede (Yes, it can be done)" (Respondent 12, personal

communication, June 1, 2008).

Summary of Findings by Research Question

An enumeration of the data presented above provided valuable insight to the

perceptions held by Latino parents about their involvement in their students' education

and pursuit of higher education. Through in-depth discussions in focus groups,

respondents recounted personal stories, perceptions held and desires for the future. These

focus group discussions presented the themes leadership and parenting, family and

culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and

information and resources. The following section provides a description of the qualitative

analysis and thematic findings that emerged, organized according to the research

questions for this study.

Research question one. What are the perceptions of Latino parents about parent

involvement in their children's education? Analysis of the archival data revealed that the

majority of respondents believed that meetings with their child's high school counselor,

meetings with their child's teacher, regularly attending school activities and events,

assisting their child with homework regularly, and encouraging their child with words to

do well in school and attend college are all examples of parent involvement. Also, 80%

of respondents reported that they assist their child with homework regularly, while 17%

reported that they do not assist regularly. Ninety-six percent of respondents reported that

they regularly encourage their child to attend college. One percent of respondents

reported that they do not regularly encourage that behavior. Three percent of respondents did not provide a response.

According to the respondent's reflections, parent involvement in their children's education means that the parent must assume responsibility for that education. Parents must take action and be proactive in communicating with teachers and school personnel as well as with their children, about education. Additionally, respondents felt strongly that parents should demonstrate involvement by providing for their children, both financially and emotionally. Additionally, 94% of English-speaking respondents, 78% of Spanish-speaking respondents and 100% of respondents who declared speaking both English and Spanish reported feeling comfortable questioning their child's educators when something is not right. Three percent of English-speaking respondents and 13% of Spanish-speaking respondents contented not feeling comfortable questioning their child's educators when something is not right.

Focus group discussions largely involved the belief that parents should be proactive in forming partnerships with schools, teachers and students, with a common goal being the educational success of their children. One hundred percent of respondents expressed the belief that partnerships with teachers and schools are highly desired. However, many respondents, especially those who reported their primary language was Spanish, acknowledged the fact that communication is often a challenge to forming and maintaining partnerships. Forty-one percent of respondents in this study reported Spanish as their primary language and 5% reported both English and Spanish as their primary languages.

Further, focus group respondents' perceptions about Latino parent involvement in their children's education was related to the educational preparedness of parents. Thirty-seven percent of respondents disclosed that their own parents' educational level was quite low and, as a result, their own parents' involvement in their education was minimal, if not absent entirely. Additionally, 30% of respondents reported having completed up to the 12th grade or the General Education Development test. However, 35.75% completed 11th grade or below. Nine percent of all respondents in this study reported having completed an Associate of Arts degree, 4% completed a bachelor's degree, and 4% completed a master's degree. Moreover, focus group discussions were riddled with comments about how undeveloped knowledge of the U.S. educational system and low educational levels of parents served as challenges to being involved in the education of the participants' children.

Themes of communication, partnerships and networks, family and culture, background and knowledge, and leadership and parenting were present across focus groups responses relating to research question one.

Research question two. What are the perceptions of Latino parents of the role of the school and of the teacher in their children's education? Analysis of archival data revealed that 90% of respondents feel comfortable communicating with teachers and school personnel and 80% of respondents feel that they know what questions to ask their child's school counselor. However, 45% of respondents feel that the educators are the authority of their child's education while 47% disagree.

Respondents provided answers to questions about their perceptions of the role of the teacher and that of the school. Responses largely included thoughts that the teacher should teach state mandated material and should be caring and motivating. Teachers are also expected to be willing to communicate and meet with parents about their children's educational endeavors. Furthermore, schools were believed to have a significant role in the education of children. School personnel are expected to behave in a professional manner, reach out to parents, welcome parent involvement, and be willing to communicate with both English and Spanish speakers.

Thirty-five percent of respondents reported that they feel instances of dissatisfaction with teachers and schools and articulated thoughts that teachers and schools do not care about the education of their children. Respondents also recounted that teachers and schools are not willing to guide and communicate with parents about the education of their children.

Themes of communication, partnerships and networks, information and resources and leadership and parenting were present across focus groups responses relating to research question two.

Research question three. What behaviors do Latino parents perceive as involvement in their children's education? As previously mentioned in this chapter, analysis of archival data showed that the majority of respondents were opposed to the statement, "*I cannot afford to provide my child with educational supplies that he/she needs.*" Seven percent of the respondents strongly agreed, 8% agreed, 33% disagreed, and

46% strongly disagreed with this statement. Five percent of respondents chose not to provide a response.

During focus group discussions, respondents expressed their perceptions of what involvement in their children's education includes. Across focus groups, it was perceived that providing educational supplies, making encouraging statements, and monitoring homework completion are forms of involvement by parents.

3.1.   What do Latino parents consider as involvement in their children's college preparation process? Analysis of archival data revealed that a majority of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "*I do not feel comfortable communicating with school officials because of language barriers.*" Six percent of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while 8% agreed, 32% disagreed and 49% strongly disagreed with this statement. Five percent did not respond. Moreover, when analyzed by parent responses according to their primary language spoken, 4% of respondents who reported English as their primary language agreed that they have uncomfortable feelings while 95 % disagreed that they experience uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators because of a perceived language barrier. On the other hand, of those respondents who reported Spanish as their primary language, 29% had uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators while 62% reported not having uncomfortable feelings because of a perceived language barrier.

During focus group discussions, respondents agreed that involvement in their children's college-preparation process includes allowing the children to participate in

educational programs, communicating expectations and values to their children, and

embracing support from extended family.

> Parents have to make sure that their kids understand that high school is not enough. You can finish through high school but really, it's not enough. You need to want to go on. And parents have to make their children to want to go on, to encourage to go on beyond high school. (Respondent 2, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

It was also the perception of respondents that forming partnerships with schools and

teachers is considered parent involvement in education.

> I personally have email to my children's teachers, which I use regularly to discuss the progression of my children. My wife and I both go to all of their school activities, i.e. choir awards, academic awards, open house, etc. We have in the past also helped in the classroom. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

3.2.   In what ways do Latino parents feel they contribute to their children's

academic performance and college preparation process? Analysis of archival data

revealed that 96% of respondents reported that they regularly encourage their children to

attend college. Archival data also demonstrates that 18% of respondents had not had a

meeting with their child's school counselor during the previous school year, while 14%

attended one meeting, 19% attended two meetings, and 14% attended three meetings.

Thirty-five percent reported having attended four or more meetings of this type.

Moreover, 86% of these respondents reported having attended a meeting with their

child's teacher in the previous school year, while 11% did not attend a meeting of this

type. When analyzed by parent responses according to primary language spoken by the

respondent, findings revealed that English speaking respondents and Spanish speaking

respondents equally reported having met with their child's school counselor during the previous school year (see Figure 8).

Respondents identified ways in which parents contribute to their children's academic performance and college preparation process. One method of contribution espoused by respondents was family leadership. Respondents felt that Latino parents provide leadership for their family by communicating expectations and vision for the future, encouraging and supporting their children, and applying discipline when necessary. Another method of contribution in this regard was identified as participation in school events. Although respondents in this study felt that attending school activities was often difficult to schedule and sometimes not welcomed by teachers and schools, they felt that attendance is necessary.

All six of the themes: leadership and parenting, family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus groups responses relating to research question three.

Research question four. What do Latino parents perceive are factors that facilitate or challenge their efforts to support their children's education and college preparation process? Statistics of several topic areas that were found through analysis of archival data will be cited below. In regard to information on financial aid for college, 85% of respondents indicated a need for information about financial aid for college, 70% did not know what a Stafford Loan was, 67% were unfamiliar with a Pell Grant, 60% did not know about the FAFSA, and 74% were unfamiliar with a Parent Plus Loan. In regard to

information on standardized tests 71% of respondents believed they were well informed about the High School Exit Exam, 81% were well informed about the SAT, 45% did not know the highest possible score on the SAT, 43% did not know how many times their child could take the SAT and 40% were not well informed about the resources their child could use to prepare for the test. Moreover, 78% reported being married, while 8% were divorced, 1% was separated, and 8% were single. In regard to financial stability and income, 47% of those who chose to report their annual household income earned below $50,000 per year. Fifty percent of respondents reported having two individuals contributing to the household income and 48% reported having one individual contributing.

Reflections by the respondents during focus groups revealed several factors that facilitate or inhibit their efforts to support their children's education and college preparation process. The factors identified for facilitating their efforts include extended family support, partnerships, cultural values and expectations, money, time and intrinsic motivation. The factors identified that challenge their efforts include discrimination, lack of time and energy, limited financial stability, child's peer influence, single parenting, unwilling teachers, language disconnect, large family size, educational background, and lack of knowledge and information.

4.1   What do Latino parents perceive are social issues that challenge or facilitate their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process? Analysis of demographic questionnaires for this study revealed that 43% of respondents did not have relatives who completed college. Of the 57% who did have college graduate

relatives, 31% of the degrees were attained in a country other than the United States.

Furthermore, single parents expressed hardship because of their martial status and

parenting situation. Analysis of the demographic questionnaire shows (Figure 10) that

while 70% of respondents in this study reported being married, 13% reported being

single, 13% reported being divorced, and 4% chose to not respond.

Focus groups respondents expanded on several socially based ideas that both

facilitate and challenge Latino parents in their efforts to be involved in their children's

education. For instance, discussions revealed that the role that the extended family plays

in the educational success of children often empowers parents to be involved.

Additionally, partnerships with teachers and community help parents to be involved by

forming networks and providing information and resources for parents. Socially,

respondents felt that they are at a disadvantage because they are not privileged with

highly educated extended family, peers, or community resources.

4.2   What do Latino parents feel are the cultural issues that challenge or

facilitate their efforts to be involved in their children's education and college preparation

process? Respondents also expanded on several culturally-based ideas that both facilitate

and challenge Latino parents in their efforts to be involved in their children's education.

First, respondents were clear in pointing out that their cultural values are present and that

the well-being of family is a priority for them. The emphasis is on family and values as

indicated by the fact that 100% of respondents want their children to perform well in

school and to attend college.

Respondents discussed several cultural challenges that they face to being involved or as involved as they would like to be. For instance, educational background was a cultural challenge discussed. As illustrated in Figure 14, of the 14 respondents not born in the U.S., 2 completed higher than grade 12, while zero completed some college or more. Of the nine respondents who were born in the U.S., one completed below grade 12, while two completed the 12th grade or GED. Five of those respondents completed some college or more, with one completing a bachelor's degree and one completing a master's degree. Language disconnect was also reported to be a challenge to communicating and being involved, as was large family size. The larger the family, the more financial hardships the respondent reported. Nine percent of respondents who participated in this study reported having only one child, while 26% reported having two children. Fifty-two percent of respondents reported having four or more children. Throughout the focus group discussions, respondents expressed belief that their lack of knowledge of the U.S. educational system caused some disconnect between them and the teachers and schools. Discrimination was also spoken of as a challenge experienced by several respondents and their families.

The themes family and culture, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus groups responses relating to research question four.

Research question five. What information, resources, and guidance do Latino parents believe are needed to enhance their involvement in their children's education and the college preparation process? During the focus group sessions, the opportunity to list

areas for information, resources, and guidance needed by Latino parents enabled

respondents to share their aspirations for the future of their children's education and

development. Information needed included standardized testing, educational plan,

financial aid, what classes are needed to take in high school to get ready for a four-year

institution, college eligibility requirements, college application process, community

educational programs, educational programs for parents, and information about what are

the best extracurricular activities for children to engage in in order to enhance potential

for admission to college. Throughout the focus groups, it also became apparent that

respondents felt they could use more resources to aid them in being involved in their

children's education. Some of the resources listed by respondents included, community

programs, parent motivation techniques, parent counselor/mentor (educational aspect),

communication skills with children, money, educational programs for parents, support

system of friends/ networks, communication from teachers, accommodation by teachers

for parents who do not speak English very well and who are not very comfortable

speaking because of the English barrier, information disseminated in Spanish, effective

counselors, knowledge of the U.S. educational system and a parent involvement guide.

The themes family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks,

background and knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus

groups responses relating to research question five.

<p style="text-align:center">Summary</p>

The findings of this mixed methods study are based on quantitative and

qualitative data. The data was reviewed and analyzed using comparative coding methods.

The next chapter presents a summary, and the conclusions of this study. The chapter closes with recommendations for policymakers, researchers, educators, school administrators, educational programs and non-profit educational organizations based on the conclusions of this study and for future research in this area.

Chapter Five:

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter Four presented the analysis and findings of this study. Thematic findings

were presented, followed by findings organized by research question. This chapter

presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study. The summary

section in this chapter restates the problem and purpose of this study, as well as the

methodology and significant findings. The conclusions section presents discussion of key

points from the findings according to the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter

One. Finally, the researcher offers recommendations regarding implications of the study's

findings and conclusions for future research and for practice in school and community

settings.

Summary

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the literature on parent involvement in education, the perspectives of

educators, students, and parents reveal that parent involvement has a positive impact on

students' educational achievement. However, in Latino communities and families,

students are not receiving the benefits of parent involvement in education, as they

continue to perform poorly in secondary education and have low college enrollment rates.

"Hispanics have the highest dropout rate among the major ethnic groups in the United

States" (Rumberger & Larson, 1994, p. 142). In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education

reported that 37% of Latinos do not finish high school (Valladares, 2002). In 2007, it was

forecast that only an estimated 53.2% of Latino students in the United States who enter

9th grade will complete the 12th grade and graduate, which means that roughly half (46.8%) of all Latino students will drop out of the educational pipeline (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). Additionally, only 24.7% of Latinos ages 18 to 24 in the United States were enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2004, compared to 41.7% of Whites and 31.8% of Blacks (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). "Neither the college enrollment nor completion rates of Latinos have increased over the last 20 years" (The Education Trust, 2003). Despite the obvious need for parent involvement in Latino families, little is known about Latino parents' perceptions regarding their involvement in their children's secondary education as related to college preparation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand Latino parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process. This study will to contribute to the body of work already done in the area of parental involvement in education. It will also provide insight into the social and cultural factors that both facilitate and challenge Latino parent involvement in the education of their children.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method, triangulation approach was used in this research study. To achieve the purpose of this study, data was collected from archival data of the Path to College organization in the form of questionnaires completed by Latino parents (N=132) and from five parent focus groups involving Latino parents (N=23). The population for the study was taken from the Latino parents of the Inland Empire region of Southern

California. One hundred thirty-two Latino parents attended a one-day educational event sponsored by the Path to College organization at a higher education institution in summer of 2007. All parents in attendance had a high school-aged child who participated in the Path to College program. All parents completed a questionnaire administered by the Path to College. The researcher's access to these questionnaires was granted by the Director of the Board of the Path to College organization. Data for this study was collected by using the Path to College questionnaire and demographic and narrative sources to conduct an in-depth investigation of the perspectives of Latino parents about their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process.

One hundred thirty-two questionnaires were completed by Latino parents. One hundred twenty-one of those questionnaires had telephone numbers provided, from which 40 parents were randomly selected to participate in this study. Of the 40 selected, 32 agreed to participate. Finally, of the 32 who agreed, 23 parents appeared at the scheduled focus groups. These parents were a *purposeful* sample selected through criterion sampling methods by accessing contact information that was provided on each questionnaire. In order to be eligible to participate in this study, respondents met the following criteria: (a) parent, (b) Latino, (c) have a child who participated in the Path to College, and (d) completed a questionnaire for the Path to College in summer, 2007.

Additionally, prior to collection of focus group data for this study, the group interview techniques were validated through a pilot study. The researcher gathered focus group data during May and June 2008. Semi-structured, face-to-face, audio-recorded focus groups that varied in duration from 60 minutes to 80 minutes, were the primary

data collection method. The focus groups were guided by the nine open-ended questions. All focus groups were conducted in English or Spanish, according to the language of preference of the respondents. If the respondents chose a focus group that was to be conducted in Spanish, a Spanish interpreter was present to translate for the researcher and for non-Spanish speakers in the room. A thorough analysis and process for coding of data revealed quantitative and qualitative findings. Findings revealed insight about Latino parent perceptions that is essential for students, educators, educational programs and education policy makers.

Summary of Significant Findings

An examination of the data of this study provides valuable insight to the perceptions held by Latino parents about their involvement in their students' education and pursuit of higher education. Findings were similar across respondents in all five focus groups. Focus group discussions yielded the themes of leadership and parenting, family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources. The following section provides a description of the qualitative analysis and thematic findings that emerged, organized according to the research questions that guided this study.

Research question one. What are the perceptions of Latino parents about parent involvement in their children's education? Analysis of the archival data revealed that the majority of respondents believed that meetings with their child's high school counselor, meetings with their child's teacher, regularly attending school activities and events, assisting their child with homework regularly, and encouraging their child with words to

do well in school and attend college are all examples of parent involvement. Also, 80%

of respondents reported that they assist their child with homework regularly, while 17%

reported that they do not assist regularly. Ninety-six percent of respondents reported that

they regularly encourage their child to attend college. One percent of respondents

reported that they do not regularly encourage that behavior. Additionally, 94% of

English-speaking respondents, 78% of Spanish-speaking respondents and 100% of

respondents who declared speaking both English and Spanish reported feeling

comfortable questioning their child's educators when something is not right. Three

percent of English-speaking respondents and 13% of Spanish-speaking respondents

contented not feeling comfortable questioning their child's educators when something is

not right.

 According to the respondents' reflections during focus groups, parent

involvement in their children's education means that the parents assume a role of

responsibility for their child's education. The idea was also expressed that parents should

be proactive in communicating with teachers and school personnel as well as with their

children about education. Additionally, respondents felt that parents might demonstrate

involvement by providing for their children, both financially and emotionally.

 Focus group discussions largely involved the belief that parents should be

proactive in forming partnerships with schools, teachers, and students, with a common

goal being the educational success of their children. One hundred percent of respondents

from focus group discussions expressed the belief that partnerships with teachers and

schools are highly desired. However, many respondents, especially those who reported

their primary language as Spanish, acknowledged the fact that communication is often a

challenge to forming and maintaining partnerships. Forty-one percent of respondents in

this study reported on the demographic questionnaire that Spanish is their primary

language and 5% reported both English and Spanish are their primary languages.

Further, focus group respondents' perceptions about Latino parent involvement in

their children's education involved consideration of educational preparedness of parents.

Ninety percent of respondents disclosed that their own parents' educational level was

quite low and, as a result, their own parents' involvement in their education was minimal,

if not absent. Moreover, focus group discussions were riddled with comments about how

a lack of knowledge of the educational system and the low educational levels of parents

challenged their involvement in the education of their children.

The themes of communication, partnerships and networks, family and culture,

background and knowledge, and leadership and parenting were present across focus

groups' responses relating to research question one.

Research question two. What are the perceptions of Latino parents of the role of

the school and of the teacher in their children's education? Analysis of archival data

revealed that 90% of respondents feel comfortable communicating with teachers and

school personnel and 80% of respondents feel that they know what questions to ask their

child's school counselor. However, 45% of respondents felt that educators are the

authority of their child's education, while 47% disagreed.

Responses during focus groups largely included the belief that the teachers should

teach state-mandated material and that they need to be caring and motivating. Teachers

are also expected to be willing to communicate and meet with parents about their

children's educational endeavors.

Thirty-five percent of respondents recounted instances of dissatisfaction with

teachers and schools. These responses articulated thoughts that teachers and schools do

not care about the education of parents' children. Responses also described teachers and

schools as not willing to guide, and communicate with, parents about the education of

their children.

The themes communication, partnerships and networks, information and

resources, and leadership and parenting were present across focus groups responses

relating to research question two.

Research question three. What behaviors do Latino parents perceive as

involvement in their children's education? Analysis of archival data showed that the

majority of respondents disagreed with the statement, "*I feel that I cannot afford to

provide my child with the educational supplies the he/she needs*." Seven percent of the

respondents strongly agreed, 8% agreed, 33% disagreed and 46% strongly disagreed with

this statement. Five percent of respondents chose not to provide a response.

During focus groups, respondents expressed their perceptions of what

involvement in their children's education includes. Across focus groups, it was perceived

that providing educational supplies, expressing encouraging words and monitoring

homework completion are forms of involvement by parents.

3.1.   What do Latino parents consider as involvement in their children's college

preparation process? Analysis of archival data revealed that a majority of respondents

either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, *"I do not feel comfortable communicating with school officials because of language barriers."* Six percent of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while 8% agreed, 32% disagreed, and 49% strongly disagreed. Five percent did not respond. Moreover, when analyzed by parent responses according to their primary language spoken, 4% of respondents who reported English as their primary language agreed that they have uncomfortable feelings while 95 % disagreed that they experience uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators because of a perceived language barrier. On the other hand, of those respondents who reported Spanish as their primary language, 29% had uncomfortable feelings when communicating with educators while 62% reported not having uncomfortable feelings because of a perceived language barrier.

Respondents agreed that involvement in their children's college-preparation process includes allowing the children to participate in educational programs, communicating expectations and values to their children and embracing support from extended family.

> Parents have to make sure that their kids understand that high school is not enough. You can finish through high school but really, it's not enough. You need to want to go on. And parents have to make their children to want to go on, to encourage to go on beyond high school. (Respondent 2, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

It is also the perception of these respondents that forming partnerships with schools and teachers is considered parent involvement in education.

> I personally have email to my children's teachers, which I use regularly to discuss the progression of my children. My wife and I both go to all of their school activities, i.e. choir awards, academic awards, open house, etc. We have in the

past also helped in the classroom. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

3.2.	In what ways do Latino parents feel they contribute to their children's academic performance and college preparation process? Analysis of archival data revealed that 96% of respondents reported that they regularly encourage their children to attend college. Archival data also demonstrates that 18% of respondents had not had a meeting with their child's school counselor during the previous school year, while 14% attended one meeting, 19% attended two meetings, and 14% attended three meetings. Thirty-five percent reported having attended four or more meetings of this type. Moreover, 86% of these respondents reported having attended a meeting with their child's teacher in the previous school year, while 11% did not attend a meeting of this type. When analyzed by parent responses according to primary language spoken by the respondent, findings revealed that English speaking respondents and Spanish speaking respondents equally reported having met with their child's school counselor during the previous school year (see Figure 8).

Respondents identified ways in which parents contribute to their children's academic performance and college preparation process. One method of contribution espoused by respondents was family leadership. Respondents felt that Latino parents provide leadership for their family by communicating expectations and vision for the future, encouraging and supporting their children, and applying discipline when necessary. Another method of contribution in this regard was identified as participation in school events. Although respondents in this study felt that attending school activities was

often difficult to schedule and sometimes not welcomed by teachers and schools, they felt that attendance is necessary.

All six of the themes: leadership and parenting, family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus groups responses relating to research question three.

Research question four. What do Latino parents perceive are factors that facilitate or challenge their efforts to support their children's education and college preparation process? According to analysis of archival data, in regard to information on financial aid for college, 85% of respondents needed information about financial aid for college, 70% did not know what a Stafford Loan was, 67% were unfamiliar with a Pell Grant, 60% did not know about the FAFSA, and 74% were unfamiliar with a Parent Plus Loan.

Reflections by the respondents during focus groups revealed several factors that facilitate or inhibit their efforts to support their children's secondary education and college preparation process. The factors identified for facilitating their efforts included extended family support, partnerships, cultural values and expectations, money, time, and intrinsic motivation. The factors identified as challenging their efforts included discrimination, lack of time and energy, limited financial stability, child's peer influence, single parenting, unwilling teachers, language disconnect, large family size, educational background, and lack of knowledge and information.

4.1   What do Latino parents perceive are social issues that challenge or facilitate their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process?

Analysis of demographic questionnaires for this study revealed that 43% of respondents did not have relatives who completed college. Of the 57% who did have college graduate relatives, 31% of the degrees were attained in a country other than the United States.

During focus groups, respondents expanded on several socially-based ideas that both facilitate and challenge Latino parents in their efforts to be involved in their children's education. For instance, discussants related that the role that extended family plays in the educational success of children often empowers parents to be involved. Additionally, partnerships with teachers and community help parents to be involved by forming networks and providing information and resources for parents. Socially, respondents felt that they were at a disadvantage because they lack an abundance of highly educated extended family, peers or community resources.

4.2   What do Latino parents feel are the cultural issues that challenge or facilitate their efforts to be involved in their children's education and college preparation process? Respondents expanded on several culturally-based ideas that both facilitate and challenge Latino parents in their efforts to be involved in their children's education. First, respondents were clear in pointing out that their cultural values are present and that well-being of family is a priority. As evidence of their emphasis on family and values 100% of respondents want their children to perform well in school and to attend college.

Respondents discussed several cultural challenges to being involved or as involved as they would like to be. For instance, educational background was a cultural challenge discussed. Language disconnect was also reported to be a challenge to communicating and being involved, as was large family size. The larger the family, the

more financial hardships the respondent reported. Fifty-two percent of respondents

reported having four or more children. Respondents also expressed belief that their lack

of knowledge of the U.S. educational system caused some disconnect between them and

teachers and schools.

The themes family and culture, partnerships and networks, background and

knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus groups responses

relating to research question four.

Research question five. What information, resources, and guidance do Latino

parents believe are needed to enhance their involvement in their children's education and

the college preparation process? The opportunity during the focus group sessions to list

areas for information, resources and guidance needed by Latino parents enabled

respondents to share their aspirations for the future of their children's education and

development. One hundred percent of respondents aspired for their children to go to

college and to perform well in school. Parents indicated needing to know about

standardized testing, educational plans, financial aid, what classes are needed to take in

high school to get ready for a four-year institution, college eligibility requirements,

college application process, community educational programs, educational programs for

parents and information about the best extracurricular activities for children to engage in

for college admission. Respondents also felt they could use more resources to aid them in

being involved in their children's education. The needed resources listed by respondents

included community programs, parent motivation techniques, educational

counselor/mentor for parents, communication skills with children, money, educational

programs for parents, support system of friends/ networks, communication from teachers, accommodation by teachers for parents who do not speak English very well and who are not very comfortable speaking because of the English barrier, information disseminated in Spanish, effective counselors, knowledge of the U.S. educational system, and a parent involvement guide.

The themes family and culture, communication, partnerships and networks, background and knowledge, and information and resources were present across focus groups responses relating to research question five.

Conclusions

This study examined the perceptions of Latino parents about their involvement in their children's education and college preparation process. Conclusions and recommendations from this study are based on the perspectives revealed by respondents during focus group discussions. However, the interested reader should consider that a caveat exists in this study in that the respondents who participated are a group of Latino parents who volunteered to attend a one-day educational event in summer, 2007, the focus group discussions that followed, and who may not be representative of the larger group of Latino parents in this country. Additionally, they had children who, at the time of participation in the Path to College program, held a 2.8 GPA or above which, according to the literature, may be correlated with previous parental involvement. Nonetheless, a description of five significant conclusions from this study is presented below.

Conclusion one. There is not a single group of Latino parents that share perspectives in regard to their children's education and college preparation. Demographic information and responses of respondents in this study revealed that one group of Latino parents was born in the United States while another group was not born in the United States. Findings also revealed differences between the two groups of Latino parents. One difference between the two groups is educational background. Findings showed that parents born in the U.S. largely completed high school or above. Respondents in this study revealed that those who completed educational levels below grade 12 were not born in the U.S. Further, respondents not born in the U.S. revealed more feelings of discrimination and greater challenges in facing language disconnect with teachers and school personnel.

According to the literature in the area of Latino parent involvement, from a student perspective, Latino parents can serve as a challenge to the student's college preparation when parents are hampered by undeveloped knowledge of the English language, hold values and morals that are not aligned with college-preparation requirements, and have little or no educational preparation themselves (Cantrell, 2003; Ceballo, 2004). Nonetheless, demographic findings from this study showed a large proportion of the purposeful sample has completed education of high school or above. Respondents also revealed high attendance at school activities, high attendance rates at meetings with teachers and counselors, and high levels of knowledge about standardized testing.

The literature indicates that Latino parents do not demonstrate behaviors that are aligned with the culture of the U.S. educational system. Moreover, the respondents in this study are a different population than one in many other studies of Latino families. Therefore, it can be expected, based on the findings of this study that this group would be more knowledgeable about school expectations and helps their children more with homework than parents in the general population.

Conclusion two. The Latino population under study expressed high at-home support for their children's present and future education. Respondents in this study demonstrated care for their children's educational success by attending the Path to College parent workshop in the summer of 2007. They also demonstrated care by attending and complying with the focus group procedures for this study.

> It makes us feel good that we are so involved to give up our lazy Sunday to be here, to show her that it's not just about being lazy. We're still there to show our enthusiasm for her. In our conversation right now, we're learning. Actually, I'm looking back and saying, "Well, I guess we are doing something right." (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

In order to be an effective leader impacting the educational achievement of children parents may need to be highly visible in their child's personal and educational life (Munter et al., 2007). From focus group discussions, it is clear that respondents advocate for their children's future success and college enrollment. These parents also articulated high levels of intrinsic motivation and at-home support for the success of their secondary-school-aged children. Parent involvement can yield social capital that contributes to educational achievement and college enrollment (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Clearly, the Latino parents in this study desired to be involved in their

children's education and college preparation process. Thus, participants in this study had

children with a 2.8 or above GPA and were willing to attend a one-day educational event

and focus group which, according to the literature, makes them different than most Latino

parents. As a result, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to the greater

population of Latino parents.

Conversely, based on the literature it is vastly reported that Latino parents are not

highly involved in their children's education, have completed below average levels of

education, have high rates of single parenting, and do not demonstrate high levels of care

and support for their children's education (Calderon, 2007). These parents interface with

teachers significantly less than non-Latino parents do (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992b). Also,

Latino parents may tend to convey lower expectations than non-Latino parents for their

children's educational success (Martinez et al., 2004).

Conclusion three. Latino parents want partnerships with teachers and schools.

Across focus groups, respondents expressed a desire to have partnerships with teachers

and schools.

> I think that we [parents] need to go there to reach out to the teachers…because if
> they don't see you there, they won't care. Or your kids are going to think that you
> don't care about them and their education or success. (Respondent 21, personal
> communication, June 14, 2008)

Parents expressed a desire to have the partnerships serve as added resource to the students

in their pursuit of quality education and college enrollment. Latino parents perceive

partnerships with teachers as a means to high educational performance by a student.

According to Epstein (1995), "When parents, teachers, students and others view one

another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins

its work" (p. 702).

In this regard, it is stated in the literature that Latino families are unaware of the

expectations held by teachers and public schools (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Habermehl,

2006; Hiatt-Michael, 2007; Rivero, 2006; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). When

expectations of either the parent or the teacher are not clearly communicated or

understood, disconnect in communication will ensue. Hiatt-Michael (2008) stated,

> At present a tension often exists between professionals, on the one hand, who espouse the concept that they alone are qualified to make complex decisions affecting the education of our nation's children, and parents, on the other hand, who believe that they should have a voice in their children's compensatory public education. (p. 62)

> Like we don't go and ask questions. We feel that we don't have the right to do that because they know what they are doing and when you make an effort to contact them, the teacher about that, for me usually teachers won't return phone calls, won't return emails. I will leave messages at the office. They won't return my messages. So you feel left out. (Respondent 23, personal communication, June 14, 2008)

As such, lack of communication between parents and teachers and schools will be

perceived as lack of ability or unwillingness to work together for the sake of a student's

education.

Additionally, when cultural disconnect is present in the teacher-parent

relationship, the likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstandings are increased.

Even when educators reach out to encourage parental involvement, they may lack

cultural understanding to be fully effective in involving Latino parents in the education of

their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Hiatt-Michael & Purrington, 2007). In regard to

current teacher practices, Moll (as cited in Garcia-Ramos, 2007) "contends that existing

practices underestimate and constrain what Latino and other children are able to learn and

to do" (p. 37).

The findings of this study reveal that Latino parents seek out partnerships with

teachers and schools. However, Latino parents also find that their efforts in seeking

partnerships with teachers and schools are not always shared. Disillusionment and

demoralization occurs when parents find that their efforts are not reciprocated.

Disillusionment also occurs when parents disagree with school operations. Levine (1998)

reported in his study that Latino parents revealed disillusionment and demoralization with

the U.S. school system because of disagreements with the policies and procedures of the

school.

Conclusion four. Cultural factors present challenges to Latino parents'

involvement in their children's education and the college preparation process. In this

study, archival data revealed that 53% of respondents reported English as the primary

language spoken in their home, while 41% of respondents reported Spanish as the

primary language spoken in their home. Five percent of parents reported both English and

Spanish as the primary languages spoken in their home. Focus group discussions revealed

Latino parents' perception that language is a cultural factor that often challenges their

involvement in their children's education.

> When I want to pursue something, sometimes there is a language barrier. The
> teacher refrains from communicating because they are aware that there is a
> language disconnect. (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

In reference to a cultural disconnect between teachers and Latino parents, Hiatt-Michael and Purrington (2007) stated, "Differences in culture, language, prior educational experiences, and time constraints present obstacles" (p. 53).

According to English (2002), cultural capital includes socio-economic status (SES). According to Martinez et al. (2004) and Calderon (2007), Latino parents have a significantly lower level of income than do non-Latino parents. Findings of this study support the literature in regard to cultural factors such as SES presenting challenges to Latino parents for their involvement in their children's education.

> Money is a challenge. But by my home, the nice areas there are better schools. And the schools in the poor neighborhoods do not have the same types of programs for students as those schools in the nice neighborhoods. The teachers are more involved with the students in the better schools with more money. I think it's the more money that makes the better schools and better teachers as well. (Respondent 3, personal communication, May 31, 2008)

Furthermore, Latino parents studied perceive that teachers do not respect Latino parents or share parents' vision for Latino children's educational future. Findings suggest that Latino parents feel disrespected when teachers do not wish to communicate with them about issues involving their children's education. Perez (2000) found that Latino parents refrain from communicating with schools because of past negative experiences with teachers and counselors.

> I go to the junior high and the teacher told me "Do you want an appointment?" He gave me an appointment in three months. Well I need to talk to him now or tomorrow. Not in three months. The teacher never respond, never gave me an appointment. (Respondent 12, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

> I talk and call teachers a lot. I'll go have meetings. There are some teachers, they don't really want to discuss anything. There are others who will want to email me

but don't really want to take the time. (Respondent 17, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

In this study, Latino parents expressed concern and minimal knowledge about how to navigate the U.S. educational system. Findings of this study revealed that Latino parents of students in the U.S. educational system are largely immigrant parents who experienced education in a country other than the United States.

Yeah. It's a big difference. Right here, it's a little less. In my country, it's a little more. The teachers stand there and explain everything and she makes sure you understand what she says. Right here its tougher. She's talking and talking and the kids are running or playing and no pay attention to her. And that's a big difference. (Respondent 13, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

Without experience as a student in the U.S. educational system, Latino parents posses limited knowledge of the expectations and operations of the system.

I see that the parents who haven't graduated from high school or don't have any other college. They don't feel that they're adequate enough to help their kids so they don't try. (Respondent 15, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

While Latino parents typically hold very high educational expectations for their children's future (Reese et al., 1995), they also tend to experience more challenges than non-Latino parents on social and cultural levels that limit their involvement in education and the college preparation process (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Bouffard, 2006; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996, 2004; Habermehl, 2006; Martinez et al., 2004; Rivero, 2006). The gap in parental involvement between ethnic groups in the United States is likely due to social and cultural factors that often include language challenges, low socio-economic status, parents' low levels of education, lack of access to transportation and daycare, inhibiting

work obligations, and a lack of understanding of the United States educational system (Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Rivero, 2006).

Review of the literature in the area of cultural challenges for Latinos revealed similar findings to those of this study in regard to Latino parents' concerns and minimal knowledge about how to navigate the educational system in the United States. Research also demonstrates that one barrier to higher levels of parental involvement in education is the undeveloped knowledge of the U.S. educational system among Latino parents (Armenta, 1993; Avaria-Verdadeiro, 2007; Ceballo, 2004; Ferguson, 2007; Habermehl, 2006; Torrez, 2004). "Many Latino parents, particularly immigrants, receive little if any formal schooling themselves, resulting in unfamiliarity with the educational system" (Perez & Pinzon, 1997). Additionally, Levine (1998) reported that in his study Latino parents revealed disillusionment and demoralization with the U.S. school system because of disagreements with schools' policies and procedures. Historically, the U.S. educational system has become increasingly complex and different from educational systems of other countries, resulting in a sense of disconnect and powerlessness for Latino parents (Hiatt-Michael, 2008). The undeveloped knowledge of the U.S. educational system serves to inhibit the ability of Latino parents to advocate for their student's academic success (Cantrell, 2003).

Moreover, cultural differences can play a role in the feelings held by Latino parents involving disrespect by teachers and lack of shared vision for a student's educational future. Accordingly, Anderson (2004) reported finding that relationships with teachers are essential in keeping Latino students in the educational pipeline. Anderson

also reported that educators' sensitivity to cultural factors and cultural differences are among the most influential factors of the school environment in pushing Latino students out of school. However, such sensitivity can be difficult when teachers may not be able to relate culturally or socially with Latinos. In general, a shortage of Latino teachers and bilingual Spanish-speaking teachers exists (Solorzano & Solorzano, 1995).

Conclusion five. Latino parents are in need of information related to requirements and resources for higher education. It is reasonable to conclude from this study that Latino parents have a need for information related to requirements and resources for higher education. Parents revealed that they need information about the eligibility requirements for higher education, financial assistance for higher education, standardized tests, college majors and programs, and the college application process.

> I need to know how to help my daughter study for college entrance exams. I would like my daughter to be able to have a mentor she could talk to for career resources. (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Furthermore, Latino parents have the motivation to become a resource for their children's education, but they do not necessarily know the appropriate steps to take to prepare themselves. Collectively, Latino parents are unaware of the academic requirements for college enrollment and the financial costs of college (Perez, 2000; Torrez, 2004).

> My daughter wishes to go to a four year university, perhaps out of state. I worry about the money involved in this. She is currently doing what she needs to do academically, but I don't know if this is enough. I feel she will need to get grants, scholarships, etc. to fulfill this goal. I hope that we are doing all we need to do to prepare for this. (Respondent 9, personal communication, May 31, 2008)
> It is crucial that schools and educational outreach programs communicate to

Latino parents that they have a responsibility and an opportunity, as members of their

communities, to demonstrate involvement in the education of their children (Gandara,

2006; Hiatt-Michael & Purrington, 2007). However, a study by Martinez et al. (2004)

revealed that Latino students do not trust their parents enough to approach them for

educational assistance. Thus, a responsibility remains to transform Latino parents into a

trusted educational resource for their children. Also, Levine (1998) reported that

challenges to Latino parent involvement in education exist at the home level: "At home, a

parent feels unable to provide homework assistance" (p. 48).

According to Armenta (1993), a significant factor to consider is that Latino

parents report low levels of awareness of outreach and educational programs. Perez

(2000) reported that undeveloped knowledge of standardized tests and the cost of college

is a challenge to parent involvement in the college preparation process.

Conclusion six. Latino families are concerned about the modicum of role models

in their local groups in respect to higher education. Relationships with role models are

social capital that can serve as a part of one's network and partnership. Cerna et al.

(2007) define social capital as:

> the relationships a student has with key figures that may provide them access to
> resources and knowledge pertinent to college enrollment and degree attainment,
> specifically the relationships with his or her parents, with high school faculty and
> staff, with mentors, and with his or her peer groups. (p. 2)

Findings of this study provide insight to the perceptions of Latino parents. These

perceptions hold that role models who could serve as a resource for enrollment in higher

education are not abundant in the local communities.

> I need to know how to help my daughter study for college entrance exams. I would like my daughter to be able to have a mentor she could talk to for career resources. (Respondent 19, personal communication, June 8, 2008)

Latino parents are also concerned that lack of role models in the community poses yet another disadvantage to their children's educational future.

> I see the Path to College as a bridge. A bridge in the respect that, you know, she's opening a new door and you're providing opportunities and whether it be financial or making personal contact with you specifically. You do a lot of networking stuff. It's great. There should be more programs like that in my opinion. (Respondent 14, personal communication, June 1, 2008)

In a recent study, Olivo (2009) found that alumni of the Path to College program reported the most influential contributor to their success was the social capital from adults and peer mentors they encountered while in the program. Sheldon (2002) asserted that "those with access to more social capital are more likely to be involved in their child's education" (p. 311). Latino students reported that a lack of parental involvement resulted in seeking other role models and mentors to fulfill their educational involvement needs (Ceballo, 2004). Further, Horwedel (2007) interviewed four participants of the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) program and reported that "all four women recognize the value of role models and mentorship" (p. 13). Role models and mentors play a significant part of the success and operations of this organization.

Conclusion seven. Differences among Latino-Americans and their need for information and resources from schools and community. Knowledge of the U.S. educational system is necessary for parents to know how to navigate the system and to meet expectations commonly held by teachers and administrators. Latino parents who were born in the U.S. and have gone through the educational system as a student, might

have some knowledge about how the system operates and of the expectations of parents that exist. Conversely, Latino parents who were not born in the U.S. and who did not experience student life in the U.S. educational system, may not have the knowledge about how the system operates and of the expectations of parents that exist. Knowledge of the U.S. educational system is significant to navigating through the system as a parent and as a student. Regardless, Latino parents born in the U.S. and outside of the U.S. and who have children enrolled in the U.S. secondary school system desire educational support and resources.

Latino parents desire educational information and resources to help them to be involved in their children's education and, ultimately, to help their children attain college enrollment. The want for social capital is not exclusive to Latino parents who were not born in the United States. In fact, Latino parents who were born in the U.S. and who have knowledge of the U.S. educational system are among the group who reported a need for educational information and resources.

The Differences Among Latino-Americans and Their Need For Information And Resources From Schools and Community model can offer accurate ideas, thoughts and visuals of the social support in the forms of educational information and resources desired by Latino parents. Educational information and resources are not only needed from teachers and schools, but also from local community (family, programs, and mentors).
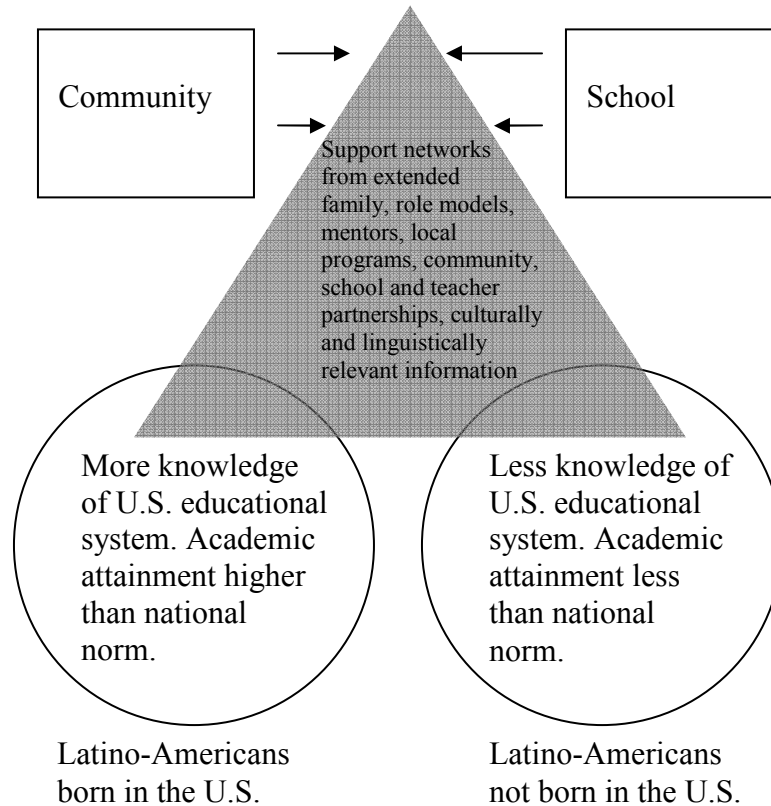
Figure 15. Differences among Latino-Americans and their need for information and resources from schools and community.

The model identifies two groups of Latino parents, those born in the U.S. and those not born in the U.S. The parents born in the U.S. are equipped with more knowledge of the U.S. educational system than the parents who were born in a country other than the U.S. and report levels of academic attainment higher than the national norm. However, both groups of parents, regardless of country of birth, desire support for their involvement in their children's secondary education and college preparation process from networks, extended family, role models, mentors, local programs, community, school and teacher partnerships, and culturally and linguistically relevant information.

Both groups of Latino parents desire support, information and resources from schools and their respective communities.

This study found that groups of Latino parents are not all the same in respect to their educational background, country of origin, educational knowledge, or perspectives about their children's education. This study also has found that, as a whole, the group of Latino parents who participated in the study were involved in their children's education, and are different in that respect than groups of Latino parents found in most other studies.

A key component of the Differences Among Latino-Americans And Their Need For Information And Resources From Schools And Community model is to refine understanding that not all Latino parents are the same in respect to their country of birth or knowledge of the U.S. educational system. However, they are the same in that they seek from their communities and schools, partnerships with schools and teachers, support networks, educational resources, mentors and role models, and desire educational information disseminated in a culturally and linguistically relevant manner. The model illustrates the social support desired by Latino parents across the continuum of parents with secondary school aged children with the intent to go to enroll in college.

The model is unique in that it was empirically derived based on the researcher's investigation of Latino parent perspectives through mixed methods. Additionally, the model considers the fact that not all Latino parents with secondary school-aged children are the same in their educational completion levels, knowledge of the U.S. educational system, citizenship or country of birth and that not all Latino parents hold the same perspectives regarding their involvement in their children's education or college

preparation process. Regardless of differences among groups of Latino parents, this model sheds light on the fact that social capital is essential to aiding Latino parents in their involvement efforts in their children's education and preparation for higher education. Therefore, schools, administrators, teachers, counselors, outreach programs, educational non-profit organizations and community leaders can use this model to develop policies and plans for providing Latino parents with desired means of social capital.

Recommendations

Paull and Hughes (2005) stated, "To be effective, we must choose to be personally responsible about a specific concern or concerns, take appropriate committed action as individuals or as individuals in concert with others" (p. 1). Additionally, committed action on the part of administrators, educators, and policymakers is necessary to form partnerships with Latino parents (Garcia-Ramos, 2007). Insight about Latino parent perceptions is essential for policymakers, outreach programs, educational non-profit organizations, school personnel, students and communities to be effective in their efforts. The perceptions of Latino parents should be considered in any attempts to involve Latino parents in education. The following recommendations are intended to support the establishment of effective efforts to involve Latino parents in their children's education and college preparation process.

Recommendations for servicing all Latino parents. First and foremost, school and district administrators should know the population of their schools. Teachers should be briefed by administrators about the population of the students in their classrooms. It is

very important for educators to know exactly who they are teaching, about the parents of the students, and to learn the variety of perspectives held by Latino parents of students in the classroom.

Recommendations for encouraging Latino parents to support and care about their children's education. Considering that research has shown a link between parent involvement and academic achievement, Latino parents across the nation should be encouraged to support and care about their children's education. It is recommended that the input of Latino parents be solicited when making important decisions related to the education of their children. The purpose and vision of the school or program should be clearly communicated to Latino parents, utilizing a Spanish translator when necessary. Hiatt-Michael (2001a), supports this recommendation when she states, "The educational leader's role is to translate the essence of the purpose in a manner that is understood by all members of the school community" (p. 118). Additionally, Latino parents should be welcomed into a supportive environment and encouraged to be active participants in the education of their children. Policymakers and educators should plan and implement the following activities: "Invitations to informal 'café y pan dulce' (equivalent to "dessert and coffee") gatherings before school, phone calls, home visits and after-school conversations in the school yard with parents who pick up their children" (Huerta-Macias, 1998, p. 42). Finally, Latino parents should be empowered to make important decisions about their children's education and to participate as an authoritative figure.

Recommendations for establishing productive partnerships between Latino parents, teachers, and schools. Lasting partnerships involving teachers, schools and

Latino parents should be established with high priority. Partnerships between parents and

schools help ethnic minority parents and their children succeed in educational settings

(Garcia-Ramos, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Moll & Ruiz, 2002). Policymakers, outreach

program leaders, educational non-profit organizations, school personnel, students and

community leaders should make partnerships a priority in their educational agenda. In

doing so, educators and other school personnel should understand that Latino parents will

actively participate when the environment is welcoming, respectful, friendly, inclusive

(Allen-Jones, 2004; Hiatt-Michael & Purrington, 2007; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1994) in

culturally responsive ways. Partnerships are networks that not only enhance student

outcomes, but also improve parent motivation, confidence, and teachers' efforts.

Additionally,

> Teachers' efforts to involve families promote the following: better student
> attendance; higher graduation rate from high school; fewer retentions in the same
> grade; increased levels of parent and student satisfaction with school; more
> accurate diagnosis of students for educational placement in classes; reduced
> number of negative behavior reports; and, most notably, higher achievement
> scores on reading and math tests. (Hiatt-Michael, 2001a, p. 1)

To address needs identified in the literature and in this study and to develop the

partnerships recommended in the literature, schools could hold conferences or

"educational events" for parents that have the purpose of establishing relationships,

disseminating information and resources and creating a plan to work together for the sake

the Latino students' educational achievement. It is further recommended that such

educational events are modeled after the one described by Hiatt-Michael et al. (2007) or

the one studied by Olivo (2009).

Teachers and schools should reach out to Latino parents in culturally and linguistically responsive ways. Translators should be utilized and provided for in school district budgets. Teachers and schools should also distribute information to parents that address the concerns of the Latino cultural demographic. Such concerns include a need for Latino and Spanish-speaking role models, financial aid information, college eligibility, available resources, effective ways to communicate with students and teachers, and expectations of parents. Finally, teachers and schools should make partnerships with parents more possible by being available during week nights, weekends, and for home-visits.

Recommendations for addressing perceptual cultural challenges among Latino parents. "What is not as easily fixed are values and beliefs that run counter to views held in Western industrialized countries about individual success and school achievement" (Valdés, 1996, p. 168). Although it will be challenging for communities to address the perceptual cultural challenges among Latino parents, it is recommended that Latino parents be provided with opportunities to express their concerns. Such opportunities will be created by active solicitation and genuine concern for the cultural challenges experienced by Latino parents. Hiatt-Michael (2007) suggested that in order for teachers to cross the language barrier, they should consider nonverbal cultural communication: "A concerned look, outstretched hand, and relaxed body translate as personal interest to a Hispanic family" (p. 5). Perhaps an evening or weekend assembly should be organized at schools for the sole purpose of addressing perceptual cultural challenges among Latino parents with teachers, students, and administrators in attendance. It is also recommended

that schools, programs, and organizations that work with Latino parents and education develop task forces that will specifically address cultural challenges and possible antidotes.

Additionally, parents should be made to feel respected as an authority figure in the education of their children. Latino parents hold moral and cultural values that influence their vision for their children's educational future. Teachers may not always hold similar visions nor respect for Latino parents as a responsible party for their children's education. "The misunderstandings…that are caused by lack of information can be adjusted. Teachers can be informed about what parents do not know, and parents can be taught how American schools work" (Valdés, 1996, p. 168). In order to establish mutual respect and aligned vision, opportunities for Latino parents and teachers to become familiar with each other on a personal level should be a high priority at the beginning of each school year. Home visits by teachers are known to be effective at creating opportunities for teachers and parents to get to know one another. Hiatt-Michael (2007) recommended that teachers could access funds of knowledge if they, "regularly invite parent opinion, solicit their input and feedback, ask parents how they are doing, and request whether or not their child is getting what he/she needs from school" (p. 4). Gonzalez and Moll (2002) suggested that teachers act as researchers by entering the homes of Latino families and accessing the funds of knowledge: a cultural artifact that teachers can embrace to help facilitate their teachings.

Latino parents have a long history of poorly navigating the U.S. educational system. However, in order for Latino parents to be a useful resource to their children in

secondary school and the college preparation process, these parents need to know how to successfully navigate the system. Schools and teachers should reach out to Latino parents and assess their needs. Delgado-Gaitan (2004) asserted, "Latino parents already value school, and that is a critical advantage for educators to acknowledge and use as a springboard" (p. 7). In this regard, high school administrators across the nation should require teachers of Latino students to use their "prep-period" or time during the regular school day at least two days per week to solely contact parents, return telephone calls, send emails to parents and devise plans to disseminate information to parents. In addition to this, school districts should increase funding so that additional counselors or other specialty personnel are hired to accommodate the needs of students and parents. Furthermore, community groups and outreach programs should disseminate information to Latino parents in the form of workshops, informational pamphlets, and conferences that will inform those parents about what is expected of them as parents in the educational system. Parents also need to know the roles and responsibilities of teachers, school personnel, and students. Information about expectations, roles, and responsibilities will provide Latino parents with an understanding of the importance of their own role in the education of their children. This will also enable parents to meet expectations held by teachers and schools.

Recommendations for providing information related to college eligibility and resources for higher education. Latino parents should be provided with information related to college eligibility and resources for higher education. Schools, teachers, and communities should partner to organize this information and to make it broadly

accessible to Latino parents in the community. Broad access to information related to

college eligibility and resources for higher education will empower Latino parents to be

active learners and also to advocate for their children in their quest to attain higher

education. Additionally, Latino parents will become a useful resource to their secondary-

school aged children and serve as a source of social capital to their children. Schools

should host "college night" on their campus more than one night per year. Translators

should be present for Spanish-speaking parents, and these gatherings should be held on

both weekday evenings and on weekends. Childcare should be provided for those parents

who need the service in order to attend and participate. Furthermore, schools and

programs should access the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for

Hispanic Americans and request pamphlets and informational guides that are provided

free of charge for the sake of involving Latino parents and providing information related

to college eligibility and resources for higher education in a culturally and linguistically

relevant manner. High schools across the nation should also take the initiative to provide

Latino parents and families with booklets like the *Get Involved! A Guide for Parents and*

Families (Heredia, 2007) and the U.S. Department of Education's *Tool Kit of Hispanic*

Families in an effort to inform and encourage Latino parents to be involved in their

children's education and college preparation process.

   Recommendations for addressing concerns about minimal number of role models

in local programs. Latino parents hold concerns about the limited numbers of role models

in local communities. These parents are also reported to have low levels of awareness of

educational outreach programs that are established to aid their involvement (Armenta,

1993). Role models serve as social capital by being a source of influence and support. Latino parents have low levels of education and therefore feel that role models fill that void. In order for Latino parents to have knowledge and access to such role models, educational outreach programs and other community organizations should be highlighted to those parents. Teachers and schools should provide a listing of such programs and organizations with contact information and participation requirements to all Latino students and parents in an effort to enhance the social capital for their students. When attempting to reach out to Latino parents, teachers should consider the possibility that they might have more success with their efforts by making phone calls and/or home visits. Additionally, educational programs and outreach organizations should consider forming mentor-match programs, matching a qualified mentor with parents and families. Accordingly, adult mentors act as "bridges" to opportunities in higher education and socially acceptable behaviors for higher education in mainstream domains (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Schools and programs should also strongly consider presenting culturally relevant information to both parents and students. Olivo (2009) found that Latino students who were exposed to culturally relevant information and role models achieved higher levels of education than national data suggest they could be expected to receive. Olivo reported that of the Latinos she studied, 100% graduated from high school, 89% earned a bachelor's degree, 22% earned a master's and 7% earned a terminal degree.

Recommendations for future research in this area. Future research in the area of parent involvement should consider examining Latino parents who are not associated

with an educational program and who do not already show signs of being an "involved parent."

1. Future research should examine parent perspectives in order to add to the limited literature on parent involvement in education from the perspective of the parent.

2. Additionally, future research should examine the perspectives of Latino parents and compare those perspectives to the perspectives of other ethnicities.

3. Future research might consider the examination of Latino parent perspectives toward their own involvement in their children's education as compared to the perspectives of non-Latino teachers of their Latino children.

Closing Remarks

Latino parents have a strong desire for their children to succeed in school. Their involvement in their children's education will facilitate their children's educational success. However, Latino parents need information, resources, mentors, education, home visits, help from teachers and partnerships with teachers, schools, and communities in order to be best prepared to be involved in their children's education to their fullest potential. Teachers, schools, and Latino parents have shared interests in making every effort to enhance the level of Latino parent involvement. Not only are Latino parents the largest minority population in California but also the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that the perspectives of Latino parents are considered by policymakers, educators, school administrators, educational programs, and non-profit educational organizations when making decisions involving the education of Latino students. It is also vital for the sake of improving Latino student academic

performance that measures are taken to form partnerships between Latino parents, schools, and teachers and to disseminate essential educational information to Latino parents. It is sincerely hoped that the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study serve as a catalyst to bringing such measures to fruition and to motivating future research of the Latino parent perspective about their involvement in their children's education.

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APPENDIX A

Introductory Conversation with Respondents

Hello. My name is Ronald C. Heredia. I am a student at Pepperdine University. You may know me from the Path to College where you completed a questionnaire last August while you were at a meeting at California State University. I am working on a project that looks at Latino parent involvement in education. I am wondering if you will be available to participate in a group discussion with me and other Latino parents. I will provide food and drinks. If you will agree to participate, I will arrange the date, a convenient location and time for your group discussion. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time. Your name and all identifying information will be kept confidential. Are you willing to participate?

Introductoria conversación con los encuestados

Hola. Mi nombre es Ronald C. Heredia. Soy un estidiante doctoral en la

Universidad Pepperdine. Es posible que me conocen del programa Líderes del Futuro

donde presentó un cuestionario mientras que el pasado mes de agosto que estuvo en una

programa en la Universidad de Estado de California. Estoy trabajando en un proyecto que

mira a la participación de los padres Latinos en la educación de sus hijos. Me pregunto si

estarán disponibles para participar en un grupo de discusión conmigo y con otros padres

Latinos. Voy a proporcionar alimentos y las bebidas. Si usted de acuerdo en participar,

voy a organizar la fecha, el lugar oportuno y la hora para su grupo la discusión. Su

participación es voluntaria y es posible de suspender su participación en cualquier

momento. Su nombre y todos los datos de identificación se mantendrá confidencial. ¿Está

usted dispuesto a participar?

APPENDIX B

Authorization to Use Archival Data

Since 1984
Familia
Leadership
Pride

Program

◦ *We Develop Future Leaders* ◦

March 22, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Dr. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, Board Director of the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮re ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮gram, hereby authorize Mr. Ronald C. Heredia to review and analyze data from the Inla▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮gram that was collected and archived in 2007. Mr. Heredia is also authorized to include any findings in his dissertation study at Pepperdine University.

Date: 3 - 22 - 0 8

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮gram

TMR:rv

California State University
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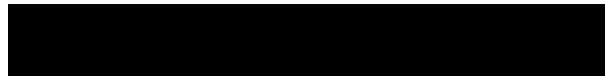
APPENDIX C

Archival Data Questionnaire

Instructions: All responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of gathering data for the Path to College and for a possible study at Pepperdine University. Please do not provide your name on any portion of this questionnaire. Circle the best available response for your personal situation, thoughts and feelings. Return the questionnaire and pencil to the proctor when you have completed.

Circle one that best applies to you. Please do not provide your name.

1. Ethnicity: Latino/Latino   Non-Latino/Latino   Other

2. Your date of birth: _____

3. Marital Status: Single   Married   Divorced   Separated

4. (Optional) Approximate household income: under $20K $20K-$29K $30K-$39K

$40K-$49K $50K-$59K $60K-$69K $70K-$79K   80K-$89K $90K-$99K $100K +

5. Number of family members in household: _____

6. Number of family members who contribute to household income: _____

7. Grade Point Average of your high school student: _____

8. Is there a family computer in the home?   Yes   No

9. Your work schedule: Days   Evenings   Graveyard shift

10. Job type: Full-time   Part-time   Temporary

11. Number of jobs that you currently have: 1   2   3   4

12. Primary language spoken in your home: English   Spanish   Other

Circle one that best describes your feeling about each statement. You may add comments when appropriate in the space provided after each question.

1) Scheduling and attending meetings with the school counselor is an example of parent involvement in education.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

2) Meetings with my child's teacher(s) is an example of parent involvement in education.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

3) Regularly attending my child's school activities and events is an example of parent involvement in education.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

4) Assisting my child with homework on a regular basis is an example of parent involvement in education.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

5) Encouraging my child with words to do well in school and to attend college is an example of parent involvement in education.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

6) I feel that I do **not** have the knowledge to discuss my child's education with a counselor or teacher.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

7) I feel that I do not have the authority to question my child's counselor, teacher or school-administrator.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

8) I feel that I **cannot** help my child with schoolwork because I don't have the time.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

9) I feel that I **cannot** afford to provide my child with educational supplies that he/she needs.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

10) I do **not** feel comfortable communicating with school officials because of language barriers.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

11) I will encourage my child to work a job while in High School to contribute to the family income.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

12) I assist my child with homework regularly.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

13) I regularly encourage my child to attend college.

STRONGLY AGREE   AGREE   DISAGREE   STRONGLY DISAGREE

14) The number of meetings that I have attended this school year with my child's school counselor is _____.

15) I have met face-to-face with my child's teacher(s) this past school year: YES   NO

16) The number of my child's school activities that I have attended in the past year is _____.

17) The ways in which I assist my child with schoolwork include: _____

_____.

18) The ways in which I encourage my child to attend college include: _____

_____.

19) I feel that I have been well informed about my child's
high school exit exam.   YES   NO

If no, what information do you feel that you would like to know? _____

_____

20) I feel that I know…
What the SAT is.   YES   NO
What it is used for.   YES   NO

How much I will have to pay for my child to take the SAT.	YES	NO
When my child is eligible to take the SAT.	YES	NO
What is the highest score of the SAT.	YES	NO
How many times my child can take the test.	YES	NO
What resources my child can use to prepare for the test.	YES	NO

21) I feel comfortable with knowing how I will pay for my child's
college education. YES NO

I need information about financial aid for college.	YES	NO
I know what a Stafford loan is.	YES	NO
I know what a Pell Grant is.	YES	NO
I know what the FAFSA is.	YES	NO
I know what a Parent Plus Loan is.	YES	NO

22) I feel comfortable communicating with my child's educators.	YES	NO
I know what questions to ask my child's school-counselor.	YES	NO

I feel uncomfortable communicating with educators because I have
a language barrier. YES NO

I feel that the educators are the authority of my child's education. YES NO

I feel comfortable questioning my child's educators when
something is not right. YES NO

Please provide your telephone number below so that you may be contacted for a possible follow-up interview in spring, 2008.

____(_____)_____

Preguntas para los padres

Instrucciones: Todas las respuestas serán mantenidas confidenciales y utilizadas solamente para los propósitos de recopilar los datos para los líderes futuros del imperio interior y para un estudio posible en la universidad de Pepperdine. No proporcionar por favor tu nombre en cualquier porción de este cuestionario. Circundar la mejor respuesta disponible para tu situación, pensamientos y sensaciones personales. Volver el cuestionario y el lápiz al procurador cuando has terminado.

Círculo uno que se aplica lo más mejor posible a ti. No proporcionar por favor tu nombre.

1. Pertenencia étnica: Latino/Hispanic   Non-Latino/Hispanic   Otra

2. Tu fecha de nacimiento: _____

3. Estado civil: Soltero   Casado   Divorciado   Separado

4. Renta de casa aproximada (opcional): menos que $20K $20K- $29K $30K - $39K

$40K-$49K $50K-$59K $60K-$69K $70K-$79K $80K-$89K $90K-$99K $100K+

5. Número de los miembros de la familia en casa: _____

6**.** Número de los miembros de la familia que contribuyen a la renta de casa**:** _____

7. Calificar a promedio del punto de tu estudiante de la High School secundaria: _____

8. Hay una computadora de la familia en el hogar?   Si   No

9. Tu horario del trabajo: Dias   Noches   centro de la noche

10. Tipo del trabajo: A tiempo complete   Por horas   Temporal

11. Número de los trabajos que tienes actualmente: 1   2   3   4

12. Lengua primaria hablada en tu hogar: Inglés   Espanol   Otra

Circundar uno que describa lo más mejor posible tu sensación sobre cada declaración. Puedes agregar comentarios cuando es apropiado en el espacio proporcionaste después de cada pregunta.

1) El scheduling y las reuniones el atender con el consejero de la escuela es un ejemplo de la implicación del padre en la educación..

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

2) Las reuniones con los profesores de mi niño son un ejemplo de la implicación del padre en la educación.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

3) Regularmente atender a las actividades y a los acontecimientos de la escuela de mi niño es un ejemplo de la implicación del padre en la educación.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

4) Asistir a mi niño con la preparación sobre una base regular es un ejemplo de la implicación del padre en la educación.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

5) Animar a mi niño con palabras que haga bien en escuela y atienda a la universidad es un ejemplo de la implicación del padre en la educación.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

6) Me siento que **no tengo** el conocimiento para discutir la educación de mi niño con un consejero o un profesor.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

7) Me siento que **no tengo** la autoridad para preguntar al consejero, al profesor o al escuela-administrador de mi niño.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

8) Me siento que **no puedo** ayudar a mi niño con el schoolwork porque no tengo el tiempo.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

9) Me siento que **no puedo** permitirme proveer de mi niño las fuentes educativas que he/she necesita.

completamente de acuerdo   estoy de acuerdo   estoy desacuerdo   completamente en desacuerdo

10) **No siento** comunicarse cómodo con los funcionarios de la escuela debido a barreras linguísticas.

| completamente de acuerdo | estoy de acuerdo | estoy desacuerdo | completamente en desacuerdo |

11) Animaré a mi niño que trabaje un trabajo mientras que en High School secundaria de contribuir a la renta de la familia.

| completamente de acuerdo | estoy de acuerdo | estoy desacuerdo | completamente en desacuerdo |

12) Asisto a mi niño con la preparación regularmente.

| completamente de acuerdo | estoy de acuerdo | estoy desacuerdo | completamente en desacuerdo |

13) Animo regularmente a mi niño que atienda a la universidad.

| completamente de acuerdo | estoy de acuerdo | estoy desacuerdo | completamente en desacuerdo |

14) El número de las reuniones que he atendido a este año escolar con el consejero de la escuela de mi niño es _____.

15) He resuelto cara a cara con los profesores de mi niño este último año escolar: SÍ NO

16) El número de las actividades de la escuela de mi niño a que he atendido en el último año es _____.

17) Las maneras de las cuales asisto a mi niño con el schoolwork incluyen:

18) Las maneras de las cuales animo a mi niño que atienda a la universidad incluyen:
_____
_____.

19) Me siento que has estado bien informado sobre el examen de la salida de la High School secundaria de mi niño.   SÍ   NO

¿Si no, qué información te sientes que quisieras saber? _____

_____

20) Me siento que sé…

Cuáles el examen SAT.	SÍ	NO
Para qué se utiliza.	SÍ	NO
Cuánto tendré que pagar mi niño para tomar el SAT.	SÍ	NO

Cuando mi niño es elegible tomar el SAT.   SÍ   NO
Cuál es la cuenta más alta del SAT.   SÍ   NO
Cuántas veces mi niño puede tomar a la prueba.   SÍ   NO
Qué recursos mi niño puede utilizar para prepararse para la prueba.   SÍ   NO

21) Me siento cómodo con saber pagaré la educación universitaria de mi niño. SÍ NO
Necesito la información sobre la ayuda financiera para la universidad.   SÍ   NO
Sé cuáles es un préstamo de Stafford.   SÍ   NO
Sé cuáles es un Pell Grant.   SÍ   NO
Sé cuáles es el FAFSA.   SÍ   NO
Sé cuáles es un padre más préstamo.   SÍ   NO

22) Siento comunicarse cómodo con los educadores de mi niño.   SÍ   NO
Sé qué preguntas a preguntar al escuela-consejero de mi niño.   SÍ   NO
Siento comunicarse incómodo con los educadores porque tengo una barrera linguística.
                                                                                 SÍ   NO
Me siento que los educadores son la autoridad de la educación de mi niño.   SÍ   NO
Me siento cómodo preguntando a los educadores de mi niño
cuando algo **no tiene** razón.   SÍ   NO

Proporcionar por favor tu número de teléfono abajo para poderte entrar en contacto con para una entrevista posible de la carta recordativa en resorte, 2008.

___(_____)_____

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Guide Questions

1. What do the words 'parent involvement' mean to you?
2. In what ways were your own parents involved in your education?
3. What is your role in your child's education.
    a. What is the teacher's role in your child's education.
    b. There are many people who work at the school besides teachers. For example, there are counselors, administrators, coaches etc. What is the school's role in your child's education.
4. Describe the ways that you have been involved in your children's education?
5. Do you think that you should be more involved or less involved? If yes, how? Why?
6. What things in your life help you to be involved in your children's education?
    Probe: supportive family, education, money, job, community
7. What challenges do you experience to being involved in your children's education?
    Probe: immigration, skin color, race, language, family history, education, money, job, family size, lack of knowledge, computer literacy
8. What are some things that you feel you need to know for what your child needs to get into a college and graduate?
9. What do you feel you need as a parent to help you be more involved in your children's education?
    Probe: community, outreach, money, information, mentors

Preguntas de Guia de Grupo

1. ¿Que es la participacion de un padre?
2. ¿De qué manera fueron sus propios padres involucrados en su educación?
3. ¿Cuál es su posicion en la educación de su hijo?
   a. ¿Cuál es el posicion de la escuela en la educación de su hijo?
   b. Hay muchas personas que trabajan en la escuela además de los profesores. Por ejemplo, hay consejeros, administradores, entrenadores, y mas. ¿Cuál es el posicion del maestro en la educación de su hijo?
4. Describa la manera en que usted ha estado involucrado en la educación de sus hijos?
5. ¿Piensa usted que debería participar más o menos implicados? Sí sí, cómo y Por qué?
6. ¿Qué cosas en su vida le ayudan a estar involucrado en la educación de sus hijos? Sonda: apoyo familiar, education, dinero, trabajo, comunidad
7. ¿Qué desafíos experimental estar involucrado en la educación de sus hijos? Sonda: la inmigración, el color de la piel, la raza, el idioma, historia de familia, educación, dinero, trabajo, tamaño de la familia, falta de conocimientos, los conocimientos de computadores
8. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que usted siente que necesita saber para lo que su hijo necesita para entrar en una universidad y graduarse?
9. ¿Qué siente usted necesita para ayudarle a tener una mas involucrado en la educación de sus hijos? Sonda: comunidad, de extencion, dinero, información, los mentores

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Ronald C. Heredia

Title of Project: A Parent Perspective: Hispanic Parent Involvement In Education And The College Preparation Process

I _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Ronald C. Heredia, a doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for dissertation.

The overall purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of Hispanic parents about their involvement in their children's education.

I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and will require me to participate in a semi-structured group interview that is designed to occupy approximately 60-80 minutes of my time. This group interview will begin with a brief demographic questionnaire. The semi-structured group discussion will take place at a time and place that is convenient for me and will include answering questions about my perspectives of parent involvement in my child's education.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this study because I am a Hispanic parent of a child who is enrolled in secondary school and who participated in the Path to College in 2007. I also understand that I have been asked to participate in this study because I completed a questionnaire for the Path to College in August, 2007.

Besides the imposition of my time, I understand that there are no obvious risks of participating in this study. I understand there are many benefits to being part of this study. Educators, schools and policymakers will have access to perspectives of Hispanic parents about Hispanic parent involvement in their children's education. The research from this study will add to the growing literature of culturally diverse families in the United States. Additionally, organizations dedicated to enhancing family-school partnerships will be able to utilize the data on Hispanic parents to carry out their purpose.

I understand that I have the right to refuse participation. Moreover, if I become uncomfortable at any time during the group interview, I understand that I can discontinue my participation and the results will not be used in the study. I also have the right to refuse to answer any question.

I understand that there is no payment for participation in this study.

I understand that my name and relevant information gathered from my participation will not be released as part of this study. In order to minimize risk, my confidentiality will be protected in a variety of ways: my real name will only be used on this form when I sign it; I will be assigned a number that will be used when the researcher transcribes the interviews; any information that anyone could use to identify me will be blocked out of the interview tapes and transcriptions; the researcher and two research assistants will have access to the audio tapes of the interview and the transcriptions; the audio tapes and the interview transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home; the audio tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. I understand that under California law, the researcher is obligated to report to authorities any alleged abuse of a child, elders, dependent adults or to self, others or property.

I understand that if I have any questions regarding the study procedures, I can contact Ronald Heredia, 310-413-0041, Ronald.heredia@pepperdine.edu. If I have further questions, I may contact Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael at Pepperdine University (310-568-5644). If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Stephanie Woo, chairperson of the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional School's Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at (310) 506-8554.

The best time to contact me is: _____ (Pacific Standard Time)
The best telephone number to contact me is _____.

I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and fully understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research as described above.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   *Date*

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   *Date*

El consentimiento informado para la participación en actividades de investigación

Participante: _____

Investigador Principal: Ronald C. Heredia

Título del proyecto: Una perspectiva de los padres: La participación de los padres Latinos en la educación y el proceso de preparación para la universidad

Estoy, _____, de acuerdo en participar en el estudio de investigación llevado a cabo por Ronald C. Heredia, estudiante de doctorado bajo la supervisión de Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael en la Escuela de Educacion y Psicología de Pepperdine University. Esta investigación se está realizando en cumplimiento parcial de los requisitos para la disertación.

El objetivo general de este trabajo es explorar las perspectivas de los padres latinos sobre su participación en la educación de sus hijos.

Entiendo que mi participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntario y me obligará a participar en un grupo semi-estructurada discución que se ha diseñado para ocupar unos 60-80 minutos de mi tiempo. Este grupo entrevista se iniciará con un breve cuestionario demográfico. La discución semi-estructurada se llevará a cabo en un lugar neutral, e incluyen las siguientes preguntas, además de exponer y aclarar otras cuestiones.

Entiendo que se me ha solicitado participar en esta discución porque soy padre Latino/a de un niño que esta matriculado en la escuela secundaria y que participaron en la programa en 2007. También entiendo que se me ha solicitado participar en esta discución porque me respondieron a un cuestionario para la programa en Agosto de 2007.

Además de la imposición de mi tiempo, tengo entendido que no hay riesgos evidentes de participar en este estudio. Tengo entendido que son muchos los beneficios de ser parte de esta discución. Los educadores, las escuelas y los encargados de formular políticas tendrán acceso a las perspectivas de los padres Latinos sobre la participación en la educación de sus hijos. La investigación de este estudio se suman a la creciente literatura de diversas culturas de las familias en los Estados Unidos. Además, las organizaciones dedicadas a la mejora de la colaboración familia-escuela será capaz de utilizar los datos relativos a los padres Latinos para llevar a cabo su propósito.

Entiendo que tengo el derecho de rechazar la participación. Además, si me siento incómodo en cualquier momento durante la entrevista de grupo, entiendo que puedo suspender mi participación y los resultados no serán utilizados en el estudio. Tambien, puedo a negarme a responder a cualquier pregunta.

Entendido que no hay pago por la participación en este estudio.

Entiendo que mi nombre y la información pertinente obtenida de mi participación no será puesto en libertad como parte de este estudio. Con el fin de reducir al mínimo el riesgo, mi confidencialidad será protegida por una variedad de maneras: mi nombre real sólo será utilizada en esta forma cuando intento acceder; I se le asignará un número que se utiliza cuando el investigador transcribe las entrevistas; cualquier información que cualquiera podría utilizar para identificar me será bloqueado la salida de la entrevista cintas y transcripciones; el investigador y dos asistentes de investigación tendrán acceso a las cintas de audio de la entrevista y las transcripciones; las cintas de audio y transcripción de la entrevista se mantendrá en un armario bajo llave en el archivo de origen del investigador; las cintas de audio serán destruidas cuando se complete el estudio. Entiendo que el investigador está obligado por la ley de California, a informar a las autoridades cualquier presunto abuso de un niño, los ancianos, los adultos dependientes o a la libre, o de otros bienes.

Yo entiendo que si tengo alguna duda con respecto a los procedimientos de estudio, me pueden contactar a Ronald Heredia, 310-413-0041, Ronald.heredia@pepperdine.edu. Si teienen más preguntas, tambien pueden contactar a la Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael en Pepperdine University (310-568-5644). Si tienen más preguntas acerca sobre sus derechos como participante en la investigación del sitio, pueden contactar a Dr. Stephanie Woo, la jefa de la Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University, (310) 506-8554.

El mejor momento para ponerse en contacto conmigo es: _____ (Pacific Standard Time)
El mejor número de teléfono para ponerse en contacto conmigo es _____.

Yo entiendo a mi satisfacción de la información en el formulario de consentimiento con respecto a mi participación en el proyecto de investigación. Todas mis preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción. He recibido una copia de este formulario de consentimiento informado que he leído y entiendo plenamente. Por la presente, el consentimiento para participar en la investigación.

_____   _____
Firma del participante   *Fecha*

He explicado y definido en detalle el procedimiento de investigación en el cual el sujeto ha dado su consentimiento a participar. Mi firma en este formulario significa la aceptacion y consentimiento de esta persona.

_____   _____
Firma del investigador   *Fecha*

APPENDIX F

Demographic Questionnaire

1. You are a: Mother   Father   Legal Guardian

2. Married   Single   Divorced   Separated

3. Ethnicity: _____

4. Age: _____

5. What generation are you in the United States (e.g. immigrant, 1st generation, 2nd

   generation, etc.)? _____.

6. Born in the United States   YES   NO

   a. How long have you lived in the United States? _____

7. How many children do you have? _____

   a. How many living with you? _____

8. Your occupation: _____

9. Your level of education: _____

10. Do you have relatives who have completed college?   YES   NO

   a. If yes, who (what relation)? _____

   b. City and state of college: _____

Cuestionario Demográfico

1. Usted es: Madre   Padre   Guardian Legal

2. Casado   Soltero   Separado   Divorciado

3. Petenencia o raza étnica:_____

4. Edad: _____

5. ¿Qué generación es usted en los Estados Unidos (por ejemplo – inmigrante, 1a

   generación, 2a generación, etc.)? _____.

6. Naci en los Estados Unidos   Sí   No

   a. ¿Cuánto ha vivido usted en los Estados Unidos? _____

7. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene usted? _____

   a. ¿Cuántos viven con usted? _____

8. Su ocupación: _____

9. Su nivel de educación: _____

10. ¿Tiene usted parientes que hayan completado el colegio?   Sí   No

   a. ¿Sí sí, quién (que relación)? _____

   b. Ciudad y estado de colegio: _____

APPENDIX G

Panel of Experts

1. Cynthia Olivo, Ph.D. candidate, Associate Dean of Counseling and Student Life, Pasadena City College.

2. Anonymous, Ph.D., retired professor, San Bernardino Valley College.

3. Tom Rivera, Ed.D., Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, California State University, San Bernardino.

4. Reyna Garcia Ramos, Ph.D., Professor, Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education & Psychology.

APPENDIX H

Letter to Expert Panel Members

TO: Expert Panel Members

FROM: Ronald C. Heredia
              Doctoral Student
              Pepperdine University
              Graduate School of Education & Psychology

RE: A Parent Perspective: Latino Parent Involvement In Education And The
              College Preparation Process

        Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert panel member to provide content validity for the instrument I plan to use to gather data for my Dissertation Study on Latino parent involvement. I am attempting to explore how Latino parents perceive their involvement in their children's education. I am targeting Latino parents in Southern California. Parent participants will be interviewed in a focus group format and will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.
        Based upon your review of the established research questions for this study, the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the Focus Group Guide Questions, please comment on your understanding of the proposed focus group questions and if you believe these questions will elicit data that will address the research questions for this study. Please indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that you believe will make the questions clearer. Please return your comments and suggestions via electronic email to bruinfan1977@aol.com. If you have further questions, please contact me at 310-413-0041.

        Your signature below indicates your agreement to participate as an expert panel member for my study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Letter to Expert Panel Members

TO: Expert Panel Members

FROM: Ronald C. Heredia
               Doctoral Student
               Pepperdine Univeristy
               Graduate School of Education & Psychology

RE: A Parent Perspective: Hispanic Parent Involvement In Education And The
               College Preparation Process

Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert panel member to provide content validity for the instrument I plan to use to gather data for my Dissertation Study on Hispanic parent involvement. I am attempting to explore how Hispanic parents perceive their involvement in their children's education. I am targeting Hispanic parents of the Inland Empire in Southern California. Parent participants will be interviewed in a focus group format and will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.

Based upon your review of the established research questions for this study, the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the Focus Group Guide Questions, please comment on your understanding of the proposed focus group questions and if you believe these questions will elicit data that will address the research questions for this study. Please indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that you believe will make the questions clearer. Please return your comments and suggestions via electronic email to bruinfan1977@aol.com. If you have further questions, please contact me at 310-413-0041.

Your signature below indicates your agreement to participate as an expert panel member for my study.

n: Cynthia Olivo

Signature   4/15/08
                                             Date

Letter to Expert Panel Members

TO: Expert Panel Members

FROM: Ronald C. Heredia
                 Doctoral Student
                 Pepperdine Univeristy
                 Graduate School of Education & Psychology

RE: A Parent Perspective: Hispanic Parent Involvement In Education And The
                 College Preparation Process

Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert panel member to provide content validity for the instrument I plan to use to gather data for my Dissertation Study on Hispanic parent involvement. I am attempting to explore how Hispanic parents perceive their involvement in their children's education. I am targeting Hispanic parents of the Inland Empire in Southern California. Parent participants will be interviewed in a focus group format and will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.

Based upon your review of the established research questions for this study, the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the Focus Group Guide Questions, please comment on your understanding of the proposed focus group questions and if you believe these questions will elicit data that will address the research questions for this study. Please indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that you believe will make the questions clearer. Please return your comments and suggestions via electronic email to bruinfan1977@aol.com. If you have Further questions, please contact me at 310-413-0041.

Your signature below indicates your agreement to participate as an expert panel member for my study.

_____
Print

_____   4-9-08_____
Signature   Date

Letter to Expert Panel Members

TO: Expert Panel Members

FROM: Ronald C. Heredia
           Doctoral Student
           Pepperdine Univeristy
           Graduate School of Education & Psychology

RE: A Parent Perspective: Hispanic Parent Involvement In Education And The
           College Preparation Process

        Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert panel member to provide content validity for the instrument I plan to use to gather data for my Dissertation Study on Hispanic parent involvement. I am attempting to explore how Hispanic parents perceive their involvement in their children's education. I am targeting Hispanic parents of the Inland Empire in Southern California. Parent participants will be interviewed in a focus group format and will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.
        Based upon your review of the established research questions for this study, the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the Focus Group Guide Questions, please comment on your understanding of the proposed focus group questions and if you believe these questions will elicit data that will address the research questions for this study. Please indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that you believe will make the questions clearer. Please return your comments and suggestions via electronic email to bruinfan1977@aol.com. If you have Further questions, please contact me at 310-413-0041.

        Your signature below indicates your agreement to participate as an expert panel member for my study.

Tom M. Rivera
Print

Signature _____   Date 4-14-08 _____

Letter to Expert Panel Members

TO: Expert Panel Members

FROM: Ronald C. Heredia
             Doctoral Student
             Pepperdine Univeristy
             Graduate School of Education & Psychology

RE: A Parent Perspective: Hispanic Parent Involvement In Education And The
             College Preparation Process

        Thank you for agreeing to participate as an expert panel member to provide
content validity for the instrument I plan to use to gather data for my Dissertation Study
on Hispanic parent involvement. I am attempting to explore how Hispanic parents
perceive their involvement in their children's education. I am targeting Hispanic parents
of the Inland Empire in Southern California. Parent participants will be interviewed in a
focus group format and will also be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire.
        Based upon your review of the established research questions for this study, the
problem statement, the statement of purpose, and the Focus Group Guide Questions,
please comment on your understanding of the proposed focus group questions and if you
believe these questions will elicit data that will address the research questions for this
study. Please indicate any changes to the wording of the questions that you believe will
make the questions clearer. Please return your comments and suggestions via electronic
email to bruinfan1977@aol.com. If you have Further questions, please contact me at
310-413-0041.

        Your signature below indicates your agreement to participate as an expert panel
member for my study.

Print _Rayno G. Garcia Ramos_

Signature _(signature)_   Date _4/11/2008_

APPENDIX I

Panel Experts' Comments

Focus Group Guide Questions

- Add question to determine how parents perceive their parents' involvement in their own education when they were in school.
- Add a question to find out what generation parents are, as U.S. residents to see if there are differences in the perspectives of recent immigrants and second, third or fourth generation residents.
- Rephrase questions 1 and 2 so that they ask a direct question (e.g. What do the words, '*parent involvement*' mean to you?).
- Question 2b - Make two separate questions.
  - Change the word "responsibility" to the word "role".
- Add a question to determine how parents perceive the difference between non-Latino/Hispanic and other.
- Ask a question to determine how parents perceive the "K" from the archival data questionnaire that refers to income.
- Add a question to determine if parents whether parents know how to use computers.
- Add a question to determine how parents perceive their knowledge of the U.S. higher education system and what it takes to enter/succeed in it.
- Add a question to find out how much education parents have (here or in their native country).
- Add a question to find out if parents have children or close relatives who have gone to college.